

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 074-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE 18 May 1965	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis August 1964 - May 1965		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE A History of Civil Government Support Provided to the 12 th Army Group's Refugee and Displaced Persons Operations by the Allied Nations Of France, Belgium, and Luxembourg from 6 June 1944 through 15 January 1945		5. FUNDING NUMBERS		
6. AUTHOR(S) Skaer, Kenneth L., Major, U.S. Army				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College 1 Reynolds Ave. Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER		
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 Words) This thesis portrays a history of civil government support provided to the 12 th Army Group's refugee and displaced persons operations by the Allied governments of France, Belgium, and Luxembourg from 6 June 1944 through 15 January 1945. The thesis evaluates the significance of civil assistance available from three different governments. Secondly, it develops documentary evidences of problem areas isolated by the 12 th U.S. Army Group in World War II. Subject areas included are the development of World War II civil affairs doctrine, the organization of civil affairs units and staffs, and the formulation of population control plans. Shortcomings are also incorporated.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Civil affairs; World War II; 12 th Army Group; France; Belgium; Luxembourg; refugees; displaced persons			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 117	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT U	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE U	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT U	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT U	

A HISTORY OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT PROVIDED
TO
THE 12TH ARMY GROUP'S REFUGEE AND DISPLACED PERSONS OPERATIONS
BY
THE ALLIED NATIONS OF FRANCE, BELGIUM, AND LUXEMBOURG
FROM
6 JUNE 1944 THROUGH 15 JANUARY 1945

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U. S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements of the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

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1965

19990622 065

U.S. ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE

(Abstract Approval Page)

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Title of Thesis A History of the Civil Governmental Support

Provided to the 12th U.S. Army Group's Refugee and Displaced Persons

Operations by the Allied Nations of France, Belgium, and Luxembourg

from 6 June 1944 through 15 January 1945

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of either the United States Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis portrays a history of the civil governmental support provided to the 12th U.S. Army Group's refugee and displaced persons operations by the Allied governments of France, Belgium, and Luxembourg from 6 June 1944 through 15 January 1945. The purpose of this thesis is twofold. First, it evaluates the significance of civil assistance available from three different governments. Secondly, it develops documentary evidences of problem areas isolated by the 12th U.S. Army Group in World War II.

Chapter I presents a narrative record of events surrounding the 12th U.S. Army Group's pre-combat preparations for refugee and displaced persons operations. Subject areas included are the development of World War II civil affairs doctrine for military operations in Europe, the organization of civil affairs units and staffs, and the formulation of population control plans. Shortcomings, as compared to today's standards expressed in Department of the Army Field Manual 41-10: Civil Affairs Operations, dated 14 May 1962, are also incorporated.

Chapter II begins with the invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944 and terminates just prior to the execution of breakout operations from the beachhead, a maneuver initiated on 2 August 1944. A period of successful refugee and displaced persons operations is described despite the deficiencies recorded earlier during the pre-invasion planning period. Factors contributing to the effectiveness of these initial

operations are the major subject areas of interest. Also included is a discussion of a potentially disastrous civilian movement control problem. This situation began to form as a result of a serious shortage of French police personnel and the lack of a functioning civil judicial system.

Chapter III commences on 2 August 1944. It contains an account of refugee operations during the 12th U.S. Army Group's advance to the Seine River, a tactical operation ending on 26 August 1944. Civil affairs activities during this period were marked by differences resulting from a variance in the tactical maneuvers of the two field armies subordinate to Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group. The 3d U.S. Army moved rapidly through areas of France where war damage to civilian facilities was minor. In contrast, the 1st U.S. Army proceeded at a comparatively slower rate through heavily damaged French cities and towns. While similar procedures were implemented in each army's area, entirely different results were achieved. Moreover, most difficulties were centered in the 1st U.S. Army's zone of operations. The effects of these different combat situations on refugee activities constitute a major portion of this chapter. A second feature is the description of an effective civilian movement control system predicated almost exclusively upon extensive French support.

Chapter IV portrays the refugee and displaced persons experiences of the 12th U.S. Army Group during its advance to and subsequent operations along the western German frontier. Tactical operations transpiring included static operations from August through early December of 1944 and a period of retrograde operations resulting from the mid-December German counterattack through the Ardennes.

During the static phase, thousands of refugees and significant numbers of displaced persons were encountered by the 12th U.S. Army Group. Serious complications developed particularly concerning the latter category of civilian personnel. Descriptions are given of these problem areas which included simultaneous operations in France, Belgium, and Luxembourg; the political aspects inherent in displaced persons confrontations; the existence of politically oriented resistance groups in Belgium; and a continuing lack of effective civil police support in Belgium and Luxembourg.

In the retrograde phase which followed, a story of confusion and the relative ineffectiveness of higher military command headquarters to provide solutions for a rapidly developing refugee problem is cited. By necessity, this situation was resolved by the actions of tactical commanders and civil affairs units at the lower echelons. The results of these many uncoordinated individual actions and the role played by the civilian governmental agencies of the three nations concerned are the main features of this last section of Chapter IV.

Inferences have been drawn in Chapter V as to the adequacy of current doctrine in the World War II situations. The validity of such inferences for the future depends, in part, upon the extent to which future circumstances approximate the World War II conditions, a matter outside the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, some lessons, clear from the 12th U.S. Army Group's experiences of 1944 and 1945, seem so basic as to prevail in future military operations of any sort. A discussion of these considerations is included in the last chapter of the thesis.

The value of this thesis is centered in two areas. It provides a historical record of the 12th U.S. Army Group's refugee and displaced persons operational methods and problem areas to include support furnished by recently liberated Allied governments. It also verifies many procedures described for current operations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is indebted to Colonel Marvin Hatfield Merchant, a member of the faculty at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, for his interested guidance and constructive criticism which contributed materially to the preparation of this thesis.

U.S. ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE

(Thesis Approval Page)

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from 6 June 1944 through 15 January 1945

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This thesis will present a history of the civil governmental support provided to the 12th U.S. Army Group's refugee and displaced persons operations by the Allied governments of France, Belgium and Luxembourg from 6 June 1944 through 15 January 1945. The primary purpose of this thesis is twofold. First, it will evaluate the significance of the support available from these civilian governments. Secondly, it will develop historical evidences of problem areas isolated by the 12th U.S. Army Group in World War II. Emphasis has been placed upon care, control, identification, movement, and security procedures.

Political, psycho-social, geographical and economic factors may all influence the civil affairs environment. As a result the formulation of firm rules or check lists applicable during military operations with refugees and displaced persons is not feasible. This thesis will explain why some measures implemented by the 12th U.S. Army Group were successful and why others were not. It will also point out some problems experienced with Allied governments.

Approach

The orders and directives received from higher headquarters will be outlined. Subsequent plans and instructions issued by the 12th U.S. Army Group will then be examined in the light of actual events.

The success or failure of these procedures will be compared with current refugee and displaced persons operational standards expressed in Department of the Army Field Manual 41-10: Civil Affairs Operations, dated 14 May 1962.¹ From this comparison, inferences will be drawn as to the adequacy of current doctrine in the World War II situation. The validity of such conclusions for the future depends, in part, on the extent to which future conditions approximate the World War II civil affairs' climate, a matter which is outside the scope of this thesis.

This historical study of the 12th U.S. Army Group's experiences with refugees and displaced persons will be presented in chronological form. Chapter I is devoted to the 12th U.S. Army Group's preparations for combat in Europe. World War II doctrine and the organization of civil affairs units and staffs will be presented in addition to an evaluation of the plans prepared during the period. Chapter II begins with the invasion of 6 June 1944 and reflects the experiences of the 1st U.S. Army prior to 1 August 1944. Chapter III carries the 12th U.S. Army Group halfway across France, a period of rapid advance in which significant problems were encountered with civilian governmental support. Chapter IV covers operations throughout the remainder of France and the events transpiring in Belgium and Luxembourg to include the brief but furious Nazi counter-attack in December of 1944. Conclusions drawn as a result of this research are presented in Chapter V.

¹The U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 41-10: Civil Affairs Operations (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), 14 May 1962.

The 12th U.S. Army Group's experiences with military government and civil affairs were extensive. The staff of this unit planned for and supervised refugee and displaced persons operations within the Allied nations of France, Belgium, and Luxembourg, each of which presented slightly different problems. Moreover, the units of this army group encountered thousands of civilians absent from their homes under tactical conditions which varied from periods of rapid advance to a static situation and to one brief period of retrograde.

This thesis will cover events commencing with the activation of the 12th U.S. Army Group in October 1943 and will terminate on 15 January 1945 when Allied troops began the final advance through Germany. Events transpiring after this date were excluded since a basic transformation in the nature of civil affairs activities occurred. Prior to 15 January 1945, civil affairs functions were designed to provide military assistance to friendly governments; thereafter, civil affairs activities became oriented toward the imposition of a military government upon a conquered Germany. Consequently, these latter events are beyond the scope and stated purpose of this thesis.

The 12th U.S. Army Group did not become deeply involved in the actual operational aspects of refugee and displaced persons activities and its role was generally limited to a determination of general policies.² As a result, the activities of the subordinate field armies have been included to facilitate an evaluation of the effectiveness of

²Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. VII, n.d., p. 13.

the 12th U.S. Army Group's directives and to amplify the problems which developed.

In addition, the 12th U.S. Army Group did not receive this official unit designation until 1944. For the period from October of 1943 through August of 1944 the unit appears in historical records as the 1st U.S. Army Group. For this reason, the author has taken the liberty of using the 12th U.S. Army Group designation throughout the entire thesis for purposes of clarity.

Finally, in this thesis the following definitions will be used to discuss the refugee and displaced persons operations of the 12th U.S. Army Group:³

A displaced person is a civilian who is involuntarily outside the boundaries of his country in times of war, who may or may not be desirous of repatriation, and may require assistance in obtaining food, shelter, and clothing.

A refugee is a civilian who by reason of real or imagined danger has left his home to seek safety elsewhere within his own country.

An evacuee is a civilian removed from his place of residence by military directions for reasons of his own security or the requirements of the military situation.

³The U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 41-10: Civil Affairs Operations, p. 127.

CHAPTER I

PREPARATIONS PRIOR TO INVASION

This chapter will develop the environment surrounding the 12th U.S. Army Group's pre-combat preparations. This phase commenced with the activation of the 12th U.S. Army Group in England on 19 October 1943 and terminated in June 1944.¹ Significant events which occurred during the period included the development of civil affairs doctrine, the organization of civil affairs units, the assignment of civil affairs staffs to major unit headquarters, and the development of plans. All of these activities influenced future refugee and displaced persons operations and each is the subject of a separate section in this chapter.

The Development of Civil Affairs Doctrine for Operations in Europe

The United States Army entered World War II with limited published civil affairs doctrine. That which was printed included no specific guidance for refugee and displaced persons operations. Doctrine available to U.S. Army personnel assigned planning responsibilities for the 1944 Allied invasion of France was found in FM 27-5: Military

¹Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, General Order 74, 16 October 1943.

Government and Civil Affairs, a field manual published in June of 1940.²

This publication was devoted primarily to the military government aspects of civil affairs and did not envision the many considerations and adjustments necessary to conduct refugee and displaced persons operations. As a result of these two shortcomings, this field manual was of marginal value to the 12th U.S. Army Group. Its main contribution was limited to the establishment of a basic civil affairs objective which read:

The first consideration at all times is the prosecution of the war effort to a successful termination. So long as hostilities continue the question must be asked with every intended act of the military government whether it will forward that object or hinder its accomplishment.³

The primary source for additional guidance concerning future refugee and displaced persons operations was found in Standard Policy and Procedure for Combined Civil Affairs Operations in North West Europe, a directive issued by the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force in December 1943.⁴ The revision dated 1 May 1944 made no major changes in the sections devoted to refugees and displaced persons.

This initial directive for combined affairs operations influenced plans developed by the 12th U.S. Army Group in three areas. The document assigned overall responsibilities for civil affairs and

²The U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 27-5: Military Government and Civil Affairs (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 30 June 1940).

³Ibid., p. 1.

⁴Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, Standard Policy and Procedure for Combined Civil Affairs Operations in North West Europe, 13 December 1943.

outlined specific objectives. It also provided general instructions for refugee and displaced persons operations. The directive failed, however, to make a clear distinction between refugees and displaced persons. The main provisions of this document were as follows:⁵

1. Complete responsibility for all aspects of civil affairs were assigned to every commander responsible for a territorial zone. Commanders were also expected to employ "all agencies" at their disposal to successfully accomplish this civil affairs mission.

2. A basic civil affairs objective, identical to that specified in Field Manual 27-5 was established. This objective was to maintain "effective control of the civilian population to prevent its interference with military operations." Secondary objectives included the exploitation of local resources to further the military effort, the assumption of early overall control by Allied national authorities, and the limitation of relief operations to activities required by "military necessity."

3. Responsibility for the actual execution of refugee and displaced persons directives was assigned to civil affairs detachments in addition to their other civil affairs duties. The size, composition, and anticipated employment of the various detachments will be covered later in this chapter; however, the employment of detachments to deal specifically and exclusively with refugees and displaced persons was not specified. The following refugee and displaced persons functions were

⁵Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, Standard Policy and Procedure for Combined Civil Affairs Operations in North West Europe, 1 May 1944, pp. 19-34.

allocated to the detachments:

- a. The operation of collecting points.
- b. The organization and implementation of necessary public health services in cooperation with the military medical services.
- c. The utilization of local civilian police personnel to reduce the requirements for military police.
- d. The provision of emergency assistance to refugees as required.
- e. The implementation of security measures as required.

4. Precise definitions which segregated refugees from displaced persons were not specified either in the initial directive or in the revised edition. The two terms were used interchangeably.

The information contained in the Supreme Headquarters' Standard Policy and Procedure for Combined Civil Affairs Operations in North West Europe represented the major source of published guidance available to the 12th U.S. Army Group. When compared to current planning guidance available to civil affairs personnel in Department of the Army Field Manual 41-10, both similarities and differences are apparent.

The purpose of current civilian movement control procedures may be summarized as follows:⁶

1. The prevention of civilian interference with military operations.
2. The utilization of civil administration commencing early in the operation.

⁶The U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 41-10: Civil Affairs Operations (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), 14 May 1962, p. 127.

3. The prevention of disease which might threaten the health of the military forces.

4. The counteraction of the threat to military security presented by enemy agents or sympathizers in transitory civilian groups.

Similar tasks were assigned in the initial guidance document issued by the Supreme Headquarters; they were found either in the tasks assigned to detachments or in the primary objective established for all civil affairs operations.

The Organization of Civil Affairs Units

Personnel resources to fill civil affairs staffs and units were found initially in a personnel pool designated as the European Civil Affairs Division on 7 February 1944.⁷ It was composed of 7,715 personnel organized into a headquarters, a medical detachment, a headquarters company, and three civil affairs regiments.⁸

Each regiment was composed of a headquarters company, a medical detachment, and a varying number of lettered companies. Two of the regiments, the 1st and 2d European Civil Affairs Regiments, were later attached to the 12th U.S. Army Group. Portions of these regimental units were assigned to the 1st and 3d U.S. Armies.⁹

The companies were composed of detachments which varied in

⁷Headquarters European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, General Order No. 13, 7 February 1944.

⁸Headquarters, United States Force, European Theater, "Report of the General Board, Study 32," n.d., p. 25.

⁹Ibid.

size. The number and type of detachments within each company is reflected in Table 1. The Type A Detachment was intended for employment at French regional capitals, the Type B Detachment for departmental capitals, and Types C and D Detachments to local governmental levels which correspond closely to the United States county and city organizations. The internal detachment organizations of the A, B, C, and D elements are shown in Tables 2 and 3. The organization of the Specialist Reserve Detachments varied between units as personnel were assigned to meet specific requirements which developed during planning.

TABLE 1
COMPOSITION OF DETACHMENTS WITH COMPANIES^a

Type Detachment	No. Assigned	Personnel in Each			Total
		Off.	WO	EM	
A	1	16	3	20	39
B	1	9	2	14	25
C	2	6	1	7	28
D	8	4	0	5	72
Specialist Reserve	1	8	0	8	<u>16</u>
		Total			180

^aHeadquarters United States Forces European Theater, "Report of the General Board, Study 32," n.d., pp. 25-29.

In comparing the composition of the 12th U.S. Army Group's

TABLE 2

OFFICERS ASSIGNED TO CIVIL AFFAIRS DETACHMENTS^b

Duty Assignment	Det. A	Det. B	Det. C	Det. D	Co. Hq.
Commanding Officer	1	1	1	1	1
Deputy Commander	1				
Deputy - Legal		1	1	1	
Public Works, Pub. Utilities		1			
Fiscal	1	1	1		
Economics, Labor		1			
Agriculture & Public Welfare		1			
Legal	2				
Fire	1				
Transportation	1				
Postal, Telephone, & Telegraph	1	1			
Civil Defense	1		1		
Public Works	1				
Public Utilities	1				
Supply	2				
Police, Fire & Civil Defense				2	
Public Welfare	1				
Supply, Transportation		1			
Police	1	1	1		
Economics, Supply, Labor, Transportation			1		
Company Officers					2
Warrant Officers	3	2	1		
Total	19	11	7	4	3

^bIbid., Appendix 10.civil affairs units to those currently described in Field Manual 41-10.

two significant differences are noted:

1. Current doctrine calls for the employment of two types of civil affairs units--command support and area support. The former vary in composition and are attached or assigned to command headquarters

TABLE 3

ENLISTED MEN ASSIGNED TO CIVIL AFFAIRS DETACHMENTS^c

Duty Assignment	Det. A	Det. B	Det. C	Det. D	Co. Hq.
First Sergeant					1
Chief Clerk	1	1	1		
Duty Sergeant					1
Mess Sergeant					1
Motor Sergeant					1
Supply Sergeant					1
Truck Master					1
Warehouse Foreman	1	1			
Accountant	1	1			
Armour - artificer					1
Auditor	1				
Company Clerk					1
Clerk Typist	3	1			
Cook					2
Cook's helper					2
Court Reporter	1				
Draftsman	1	1			
Interpreter	2	2	2	2	
Investigator	1	1	1	1	
Mechanic, Auto					2
Motorcyclist	1	1			1
Stenographer	1	1	1		
Truck Driver, light	6	4	2	2	10
Total	20	14	7	5	25

^cIbid.

from division through theater army levels on a permanent basis.¹⁰ Area support units are specifically organized to meet anticipated requirements within a geographical area and are assigned or attached on a temporary basis to divisions and higher echelons as an augmentation to

¹⁰The U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 41-10: Civil Affairs Operations, p. 46.

the command support units.¹¹

2. Both the command support and area support units are organized on a cellular basis. Each is composed of a headquarters, administrative, and command team supplemented by a varying number of functional and service teams designed to meet anticipated situations.¹² Twenty different types of teams are specified and available for use including some composed of personnel expressly qualified and trained in displaced persons operations.¹³ In addition, current doctrine clearly recognizes the importance of flexibility and expressly states that unit organizations will vary in accordance with requirements.¹⁴

The Organization of Civil Affairs Staffs

Personnel necessary to fill civil affairs staff positions at the various unit headquarters from army group through division levels were also provided by the European Civil Affairs Division. At Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, personnel for the entire civil affairs section, consisting of eighteen officers, one warrant officer, and twenty-six enlisted men, were assigned on 26 November 1943.¹⁵ These personnel were subsequently organized for initial operation into four branches--administration, operations and personnel, governmental affairs, and economics and supply. No special branch for refugees and displaced persons was considered necessary and these responsibilities

¹¹Ibid., p. 47.

¹²Ibid., p. 46.

¹³Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁵Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. VII, n.d., p. 21.

were included within those assigned to the economics and supply branch.¹⁶

On 15 April 1944, personnel were made available for civil affairs staff positions in units subordinate to the 12th U.S. Army Group when Tables of Distribution and Allowances were published allocating resources from the European Civil Affairs Division to army, corps, and divisions. Personnel authorized at each headquarters are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4
PERSONNEL AUTHORIZED ARMY, CORPS, AND DIVISION
CIVIL AFFAIRS STAFF POSITIONS

Headquarters	Officers Authorized	Enlisted Men Authorized	Total
Army	31	50	81 ^d
Corps	3	4	7 ^e
Division	5	6	11 ^f

^dHeadquarters, European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, "Table of Distribution and Allowances for Civil Affairs Staff Positions, Army," 15 April 1944.

^eHeadquarters, European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, "Table of Distribution and Allowances for Civil Affairs Staff Positions, Corps," 15 April 1944.

^fHeadquarters, European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, "Table of Distribution and Allowances for Civil Affairs Staff Positions, Division," 15 April 1944.

¹⁶Ibid.

The Table of Distribution published for Field Army Civil Affairs Staff Sections also specified the functional branch organization of the section. The thirty-one officers and fifty enlisted men were to be organized into a coordinating and a technical staff. Four branches were included within the coordinating element--personnel and administration, intelligence and information, plans and operations, and supply. The technical element was composed of personnel qualified in many fields; nevertheless, none of these individuals were expressly designated for refugee and displaced persons duty positions.¹⁷

The Tables of Distribution and Allowances did not direct a specific organization of civil affairs staffs at corps and division levels.¹⁸ Civil affairs staffs at these headquarters were expected to function primarily as coordinating agencies and no specialist personnel were included within their respective allocations.¹⁹

On 26 April 1944, Headquarters European Theater of Operations, U.S. Forces, issued a directive which elevated the civil affairs elements at army group, army, and corps headquarters to general staff status; thus, a G5 staff at each of these echelons was officially

¹⁷Headquarters European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, "Table of Distribution and Allowances for Civil Affairs Staff Positions, Army," 15 April 1944.

¹⁸Headquarters European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, "Table of Distribution and Allowances for Civil Affairs Staff Positions, Corps," 15 April 1944.

¹⁹Headquarters European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, "Table of Distribution and Allowances for Civil Affairs Staff Positions, Division," 15 April 1944.

created.²⁰ The same directive permitted army commanders to determine if similar procedures were appropriate for division level headquarters; however, most sections were retained as part of the special staff and operated under the supervision of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G1.²¹

With the exception of the staff sections at division level, the civil affairs staff organization of the 12th U.S. Army Group compares favorably to current doctrine. Field Manual 41-10 also calls for a G5 staff element at all headquarters from division through theater army levels.²² There are two pertinent aspects of the 12th U.S. Army Group's staff organization. First, it provided personnel at all major unit headquarters with primary responsibility in civil affairs. Secondly, it made no provisions offsetting the lack of trained refugee and displaced persons specialists in the detachments.

Plans for Invasion

The planning phase of the 12th U.S. Army Group's World War II history was influenced to some extent by the command structure for European operations. This command channel called for two separate lines of command for U.S. forces--one for tactical and operational orders and a second for administrative and logistical instructions.

²⁰Letter, Headquarters European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, to 1st U.S. Army Group, dated 26 April 1944, quoted in Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors, U.S. Department of the Army (United States Army in World War II; Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), p. 673.

²¹Ibid.

²²The U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 41-10: Civil Affairs Operations, pp. 45-46.

The former was headed by the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, a combined command staffed by United States and British personnel. Guidance and directives concerning civil affairs operations emanated from this Supreme Headquarters. The administrative channel was represented by Headquarters European Theater of Operations, United States Army, a non-tactical military organization charged with responsibilities which included the provision of administrative and logistical support to all U.S. Army forces in Europe. As a result, the United States' units in Europe received their civil affairs instructions from the Supreme Headquarters and resources necessary to accomplish their civil affairs mission from Headquarters European Theater of Operations.²³

Within the tactical command channel the Supreme Headquarters directed Field Marshal B. L. Montgomery, the Commander-in-Chief of the 21st Army Group, to supervise initial ground operations in France.²⁴ Field Marshal Montgomery was given operational control over all Allied land forces employed in France until the Supreme Headquarters moved to the continent subsequent to the invasion; thereafter, the several army groups would report directly to the Supreme Headquarters.²⁵

Complicating the 12th U.S. Army Group's planning for the

²³Headquarters European Theater of Operations United States Army, General Order 74, 16 October 1943.

²⁴Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. I, n.d., p. 6.

²⁵Ibid.

operations in Europe was the fact that the 1st U.S. Army was scheduled to participate in the invasion under the supervision and direction of the 21st Army Group. Later, this same unit was assigned to the 12th U.S. Army Group.²⁶ A similar arrangement also applied to the 3d U.S. Army, a unit which landed after the beaches of Normandy had been secured.²⁷ Thus, two major subordinate elements of the 12th U.S. Army Group began operations under the direction and supervision of a British headquarters.²⁸

The situation just described called for close coordination and cooperation between the 21st Army Group, the 12th U.S. Army Group, and 1st and 3d U.S. Armies to ensure no major problems in civil affairs resulted from different operational concepts. To meet this problem the 12th U.S. Army Group established an "administrative staff" composed of personnel who worked closely with their respective counterparts on the staff of the 21st Army Group during the development of plans.²⁹ This procedure served to adjust policies and establish a joint position on most matters.³⁰

Although the 12th U.S. Army Group was not directly involved in or responsible for the execution of the initial invasion plans, it did

²⁶Infra., p. 25.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. I, p. 6.

²⁹Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. VIII, n.d., p. 31.

³⁰Ibid.

publish a study of conditions describing the anticipated refugee and displaced persons situation within the projected zone of the group.³¹ This study was prepared by the Economics and Supply Branch of the 12th U.S. Army Group's Civil Affairs Section and established planning considerations for a period of three months following D-day. It was also furnished to the 1st and 3d U.S. Armies for their use in the development of detailed plans and outlined conditions in the following three categories.³²

1. Displaced persons were described as civilian personnel outside their registered national boundaries who could not be expected to return home unless transportation was provided. In addition, it was anticipated that these personnel had become partially adapted to the local economy within the area to which they had been dislocated.

2. The number of refugees expected in the initial combat phase would require facilities sufficient to handle 500 persons per corps per day except when cities of over 500 inhabitants were liberated. In the latter event, 10% of the urban population could be expected to require some kind of assistance.

3. The civilian evacuation of the entire coastal area by the Germans was also forecast which included the port cities; however, as the advance moved inland the Germans could be expected to force large numbers of refugees and displaced persons from urban areas into our

³¹Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army Group, Letter, "Appreciation D to D plus 90," quoted by Headquarters, European Theater, U.S. Forces, Report of the General Board, Study 35, n.d., pp. 3-4.

³²Ibid.

lines in an attempt to hamper logistical operations.

The plan for refugees and displaced persons which developed was based upon the statement of anticipated conditions discussed above and the Standard Policy and Procedure for Combined Civil Affairs Operations in North West Europe issued by the Supreme Headquarters. It was completed on 3 April 1944.³³ The main provisions of this plan were:³⁴

1. The establishment of basic objectives identical to those specified by the Supreme Headquarters as stated on page 7.
2. The clarification of the command relationships for civil affairs detachments. For example, once employed, detachments would begin operations under control of divisions. Operational control would pass successively to corps, armies, and the Communication Zone when rear boundaries were advanced.
3. The requirement to use existing French governmental organizations to the maximum. In areas where no such local government was in existence, commanders were authorized to select individuals and reestablish civil authority.
4. The delineation of a set of procedures to control civilian movements. Travel permits were to be issued by French authorities, under the supervision of civil affairs detachment personnel, but only after security screening had been conducted. Civilian travel in excess of 12 kilometers without a permit was not authorized. Moreover,

³³Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. I, p. 28.

³⁴Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Neptune Plan," Annex 18, 25 February 1944, contained in "Historical Documents of World War II," AGO Microfilming Job No. 500, Item 1500, reel 312.

indigenous police personnel were to be used to establish control points on main travel routes to enforce the 12 kilometer travel restriction.

5. The specification of security procedures. Counterintelligence corps personnel would supervise the security screening of refugees and displaced persons which was to be conducted by the French.

6. The directed assignment of civil affairs staff personnel to the early assault echelons entering France. Division civil affairs staff personnel were to be included in the assaulting regimental combat teams. At least one staff officer from each of the initial assaulting corps was to arrive in France no later than seven days following the invasion. In addition, army civil affairs staffs were to be included within the first headquarters echelons moving to Normandy.

Following the issuance of the 12th U.S. Army Group's Civil Affairs Plan on 3 April 1944, preparations continued and refinements developed largely as a result of conferences held with the civil affairs staffs of the 1st and 3d U.S. Armies. These later revisions were as follows:

1. Plans were completed to establish three civilian collecting camps. Personnel required to operate the camps were selected from civil affairs detachments and briefed on their anticipated duties. Supply requirements for the camps to include food and medical supplies were also scheduled for shipment into Normandy within the first fourteen days following the invasion.³⁵

2. A contingency plan was developed providing for the

³⁵Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. VIII, p. 68.

evacuation of 2,000 civilians daily from France to England. This plan was designed to counteract any German attempts to interfere with operations by forcing civilians onto the invasion beaches.³⁶

3. Civil affairs detachments were assigned to subordinate commands. Some fifty detachments containing an aggregate of 500 officers and 1,300 enlisted personnel were transferred from the European Civil Affairs Division to the 1st U.S. Army.³⁷ Similarly, plans to assign 1,197 civil affairs personnel to the 3d U.S. Army effective 15 June 1944 were developed and coordinated.³⁸

A basic factor which contributed to the relative incompleteness of the 12th U.S. Army Group's plans was the fact that the United States refused to recognize the French National Committee of Liberation, a resistance organization headed by General Charles de Gaulle, as the true government for a liberated France. Moreover, the United States did not bestow this recognition upon any other exiled French group. In effect, no national governmental authority was in existence with which military civil affairs officers could coordinate future refugee and displaced persons operations prior to the invasion. Fortunately, the Supreme Commander had received permission from the President of the United States to begin talks with the French Committee of National Liberation on 15 March 1944 with the proviso that the talks could not

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. I, p. 28.

³⁸Headquarters, 3d U.S. Army, "Report of Operations," Vol. II, Part 6, n.d., p. 2.

constitute official U.S. recognition of the group headed by General de Gaulle.³⁹

Understandably, the official U.S. Government's position presented problems. As late as 11 May 1944 General Eisenhower outlined the difficulties involved in a cable sent to the Combined Chiefs of Staff.⁴⁰ Included within the controversies outlined in this message was a lack of mutual understanding on military security, the use of local resources, the distribution of civil supplies, and the "initial approach to the French population."⁴¹ In spite of General Eisenhower's concern the President's reply on 13 May 1944 reiterated the United States' policy that civil government in liberated France would be determined by the French people in a free expression of choice, and no existing group outside of France was to be forced upon them against their will.⁴² As will be developed later, final agreement between the French Committee of National Liberation and the Supreme Headquarters was not reached until 25 August 1944.

In summary, the organization of the 12th U.S. Army Group contained no special provisions for refugee and displaced persons operations. Plans issued called for extensive support from the French Government;

³⁹Letter, President to the Secretary of War, 15 March 1944, quoted in Coles and Weinberg, p. 667.

⁴⁰Message, Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force for Combined Chiefs of Staff, 11 May 1944, quoted in Coles and Weinberg, p. 669.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Message, President to Eisenhower, 13 May 1944, quoted in Coles and Weinberg, p. 670.

however, the establishment of a national government inside liberated France was a major unanswered question.

CHAPTER II

OPERATIONS IN NORMANDY

6 JUNE 1944 TO 1 AUGUST 1944

In the introduction it was mentioned that Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group was formed by a transfer of personnel from the 1st U.S. Army Group. This action occurred on 14 July 1944. A skeleton force remained at Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army Group until late in 1944 as a part of the theater deception plan; however, all responsibilities for refugees and displaced persons passed to the new army group headquarters.¹

Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group moved to France on 12 July 1944. Actual supervision of combat units did not begin until 1 August 1944 when the 1st and 3d U.S. Armies were assigned for operational employment.² From 6 June 1944 through 1 August 1944 the 12th U.S. Army Group exercised only administrative control over the 1st U.S. Army and supervised the movement of the 3d U.S. Army to the continent; moreover, these responsibilities did not include directive authority for civil affairs operations.³

¹Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, "General Order No. 73, 14 July 1944.

²Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. V, n.d., p. 34.

³Ibid.

While the 12th U.S. Army Group Headquarters was relatively inactive prior to 1 August 1944, the 1st U.S. Army gained valuable experience concerning support available from French authorities. The important aspects of the 1st U.S. Army's operations from 6 June 1944 through 1 August 1944 are discussed in this chapter.

The Tactical Aspects of the Invasion

At two o'clock in the morning of 6 June 1944, the Allied invasion of France began with the parachute assaults of the American 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions.⁴ Four and one-half hours later an amphibious landing was made on the beaches of Normandy by a combined force of United States and British military units. The American forces represented by the 1st U.S. Army landed on fifty miles of coast line and constituted the right flank of the Allied element.⁵ (See Fig. 1)

The 1st U.S. Army, composed of the VII and V Corps, landed at UTAH and OMAHA beaches. In spite of heavy enemy resistance near OMAHA beach, by nightfall 6 June 1944 the 1st, 4th and 29th Infantry Divisions were ashore.⁶ After heavy resistance, the port of Cherbourg fell to elements of VII Corps on 27 June.⁷ By 1 July 1944, other United States elements were successful in advancing twenty miles inland to the vicinity of St. Lo after encountering slow progress in difficult hedgerow terrain. Meanwhile, Allied reinforcements were landed in preparation

⁴R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, Military Heritage of America (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 533-38.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

for breakout operations.

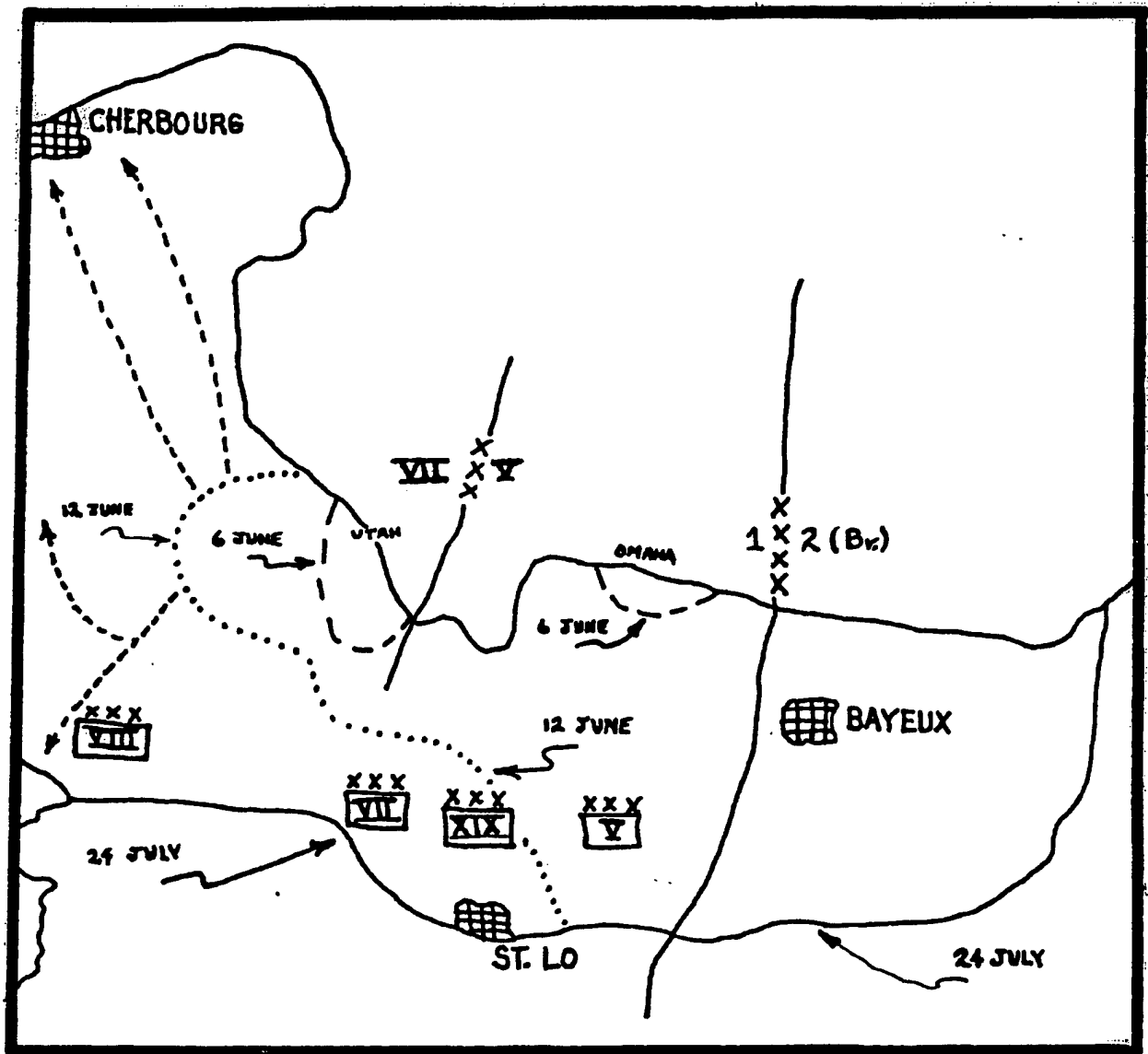


Fig. 1.--Diagram of the Normandy tactical operations.⁸

The 1st U.S. Army's Initial Experiences
with Refugees and Displaced Persons

The first American civil affairs officers to enter France landed with the two airborne divisions when they were parachuted into

⁸Ibid., p. 533.

Normandy.⁹ They were followed by divisional civil affairs staff personnel accompanying the regimental combat teams in the amphibious assault. The value of placing civil affairs staff personnel with the initial elements entering France as specified in the pre-invasion plan of the 12th U.S. Army Group soon became evident. For two weeks following the amphibious and airborne attack of 6 June 1944, refugees resulting from combat operations were moved into villages located in rear areas. Here, through the actions of local mayors, food and billets were provided by French civilians at no expense to the military logistical effort.¹⁰ This French assistance was a major factor which precluded a serious refugee and displaced persons problem during the consolidation period; however, both the French and the 1st U.S. Army were aided by the lack of large urban areas within the zone of operations.¹¹

The plans developed prior to invasion were adequate during these initial phases. In fact, they were more complete than actually required for the conditions which existed. The anticipated German evacuation of civilians from the coastal areas had not been carried out. Additionally, it was not necessary to implement the contingency plan prepared for the evacuation of 2,000 civilians on a daily basis from France to England.¹²

⁹Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Report of Operations: 20 October 1943-1 August 1944," Book V, Annex 7, n.d., pp. 154-61.

¹⁰Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. VII, n.d., p. 68.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

As the combat forces of the 1st U.S. Army moved inland, the numbers of refugees increased. The net result was a two way movement towards the center of the operational zone from the forward and rear extremities for the following reasons:¹³

1. Commanders in the forward areas found it necessary to move civilians to areas in the rear for their personal safety and to prevent them from interfering with combat operations. Although the 1st U.S. Army considered these personnel as refugees, it was the first recorded experience where civilians were classified as evacuees.

2. In rear areas coastal area inhabitants attempted to return to their homes after their residences had been by-passed by the forward combat units. These were the same individuals who earlier had been billeted by French officials in indigenous homes.

The early arrival of the 1st U.S. Army's Civil Affairs Staff Section proved to be beneficial in meeting these increasing problems. The section arrived in France on 15 June 1944 and action was taken soon thereafter to control the growing number of refugees.¹⁴ A six kilometer civilian travel restriction was immediately placed in effect which represented a 50% reduction from that contemplated in initial plans.¹⁵ Moreover, the first refugee camp was established at Fontenay, a small town on the French seacoast, on 18 June 1944.¹⁶ This initial

¹³Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Report of Operations: 20 October-1 August 1944," Book V, Annex 7, pp. 151-61.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 154-61.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 25," 4 July 1944.

refugee facility was located in a former German military barracks installation and was operated by a French welfare team composed of five workers supervised by personnel from a civil affairs detachment.¹⁷

Another measure implemented by the 1st U.S. Army was the establishment of six civilian collecting points along main highways. These were temporary holding facilities operated by civil affairs detachment personnel. Refugees were assembled at these locations and moved by military transportation to villages in the rear, to their homes, or to the refugee camp.¹⁸ Rest stops, where food was available, were interspersed between the collecting points; however, most refugees fed themselves, received food from local inhabitants along the routes, or received assistance from French welfare organizations.¹⁹

The single refugee camp proved adequate for the support of refugee operations throughout the month of June. The average camp population remained fairly constant at 800 refugees per day with arrivals approximately equal to departures.²⁰ In addition to providing food and housing for camp residents, medical support was also furnished from military resources. Each refugee entering the camp received a medical examination and a daily sick call was also held.²¹

The month of June also marked the appearance of the first large group of displaced persons. One thousand men, representing eighteen

¹⁷ Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. VII, p. 71.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 25."

²¹ Ibid.

different nationalities and all former members of a German labor organization known as "Organization Todt," were encountered.²² Once again the assistance and cooperation of the French solved the problem quickly for the entire group was moved into nearby towns where care and billets were provided at no expense to the military effort.²³

In general, the initial refugee and displaced persons experiences of the 1st U.S. Army during June of 1944 presented no major difficulties. The operation of the single refugee camp created no serious problems for the 1st U.S. Army since relatively few personnel entered the civilian evacuation system. Upon reaching the Army refugee camp most personnel passed quickly to French control since they were returned to their homes or dispersed in numerous villages and towns. The assistance received from French authorities provided adequate care and control resulting in a minimal expenditure of military resources. At this point the plans conceived in England were still adequate. The true nature of the 1st U.S. Army's operations in June are reflected in a report prepared by Major Frederick E. Simpich which described conditions in the American zone on 30 June 1944. This report reads:

Without exception the detachments are too big for the problems presented. Where one officer could do the job, four are present. Result is a general disposition to magnify the problem, make work, and undertake functions which are not a proper CA responsibility. No serious consequences are expected as the First Army has carefully drilled each detachment on the basic policy of reliance on the French. When the detachments operate rather than 'liaise,' it is in connection with military questions, as with the detachment commander who personally set about de-booby-trapping his town. Survivors will in any event

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

benefit from the field experience.²⁴

Similar conditions continued during the initial July operations. On 13 July 1944, the 1st U.S. Army reported that adequate civilian movement control procedures were still in effect and no incidents of civilian interference with military activities had been encountered.²⁵ The increasing numbers of refugees did require the establishment of three additional refugee camps; however, the capacities of these facilities exceeded the average daily camp populations by approximately 45% throughout July.²⁶ By the end of July over 12,000 refugees were reported within the 1st U.S. Army's operational zone.²⁷ The majority of these 12,000 civilians were quartered in French civilian facilities and the total capacity of the camps did not exceed 2,500 persons at any time during the period.²⁸

July also marked the appearance of a large group of civilian evacuees. Four thousand residents of the city of Caen were evacuated from the British zone and dispersed in the rear area of the 1st U.S.

²⁴Major Frederick E. Simmich, Report on Civil Affairs Operations in the American Zone France, quoted in Headquarters European Civil Affairs Division, G2 Section, "Special Intelligence Bulletin IV," 10 July 1944.

²⁵Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 34," 13 July 1944.

²⁶Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 35," 14 July 1944.

²⁷The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 6," 21 July 1944.

²⁸Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 37," 16 July 1944.

Army.²⁹ This group was subdivided and moved by French officials in three segments--one each night from 17 through 19 July 1944. Military transportation was used; however, only limited supervision by 1st U.S. Army civil affairs personnel was considered necessary initially.³⁰

Arrangements for billeting and feeding the 4,000 evacuees were handled by French military officers. Prior to movement French Liaison officers, who had been previously attached to Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, were dispatched into the northeastern portions of the Cherbourg peninsula. Upon arrival, these Allied officers then established evacuee quotas for French towns which included billeting and feeding responsibilities.³¹

Although the movement of evacuees from Caen caused no major problems, one incident was recorded which demonstrated that closer supervision was essential. The initial increment was moved on the night of 17 July and contained 860 persons including a few sick and wounded evacuees who required stretchers.³² One such incapacitated person died during the trip to the Cherbourg peninsula.³³ An inquiry by the 1st U.S. Army's civil affairs section revealed two deficiencies--a medical examination had not been conducted to isolate personnel requiring immediate treatment and the screening of evacuees for potential

²⁹Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 38," 17 July 1944.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 39," 19 July 1944.

³³Ibid.

security risks had not been completed either prior to or after movement.³⁴

To remedy the situations, the 1st U.S. Army implemented corrective procedures. Medical personnel were sent into the British zone to inspect the remainder of the 4,000 evacuees prior to movement. A civil affairs staff officer from the army headquarters was also dispatched with an assigned mission to institute appropriate security procedures. Both deficiencies were corrected prior to the movement of the second increment on 18 July 1944 and the shipment of evacuees was completed without further incident.³⁵

Late in July other indications that French support capabilities were limited also began to develop. These conditions did not reach serious proportions; however, they were potentially disastrous. These shortcomings were centered in two areas--the lack of adequate police personnel to enforce civilian movement restrictions and the lack of an established legal apparatus to punish violaters of travel restrictions.

Allied refugee and displaced persons plans called for French police to establish and maintain control points along major lines of communication. Local officials were willing to cooperate with the U.S. forces; nevertheless, they were seriously handicapped by a shortage of police, a complete lack of funds to hire additional personnel, or the absence of authority to make expenditures in those instances when funds

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 41," 20 July 1944.

were available.³⁶ This shortage of law enforcement officers presented a threat to effective civilian control procedures, and also weakened security measures then in effect.

Compounding this problem was the almost complete lack of a functioning judicial system. As late as 25 July 1944, only two French courts were in operation. Moreover, French laws did not provide for the punishment of civilian violators of Allied movement restrictions and the two courts were thus ineffective.³⁷

The threat to future refugee and displaced persons operations was recognized by the 1st U.S. Army. Assisted by personnel from Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, conferences with French officials began which resulted in the recruitment of civilians for volunteer police duties.³⁸ Modification and strengthening of the French judicial system was also discussed at these conferences but no immediate results were recorded in these areas.³⁹

July also marked the initial appearance of widespread civilian evacuations by retreating German forces.⁴⁰ Towns were found almost completely vacant upon capture and all had received heavy war damage.⁴¹

³⁶Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 27," 10 July 1944.

³⁷Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, "Civil Affairs Summary," No. 5, 20 July 1944.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 46," 25 July 1944.

⁴⁰Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 42," 21 July 1944.

⁴¹Ibid.

Information from French intelligence sources indicated that most of these urban residents were dispersed in rural areas behind German lines where adequate care was available.⁴² A few days after American forces entered French communities the town residents began to filter back with urban populations reaching approximately 25% of their pre-combat totals after a period of ten days.⁴³

Mayors and other governmental officials had been included with the group of citizens evacuated from the French communities; consequently the reestablishment of local authority was difficult.⁴⁴ Unseasonal rains and the heavy destruction of private property combined to cause minor exposure cases among returning refugees.⁴⁵ Additionally, many facilities that were found intact had been booby trapped.⁴⁶

The rather obvious solution of holding French citizens in the rural areas was not implemented by the 1st U.S. Army. Actions that were taken included the appointment of French officials, the employment of military engineer personnel to remove the booby traps, and the placement of heavy reliance upon the French to solve their own problems.⁴⁷ The primary reasons serious difficulties were not experienced is attributable both to the fact that only 12,000 refugees were encountered during the entire month of July and to the excellent support

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Headquarters, United States Forces European Theater, Report of the General Board, Study 35," n.d., pp. 4-5.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Report of Operations: 20 October 1943-1 August 1944," Book V, Annex 7, pp. 151-61.

provided by the French.

Summary

The ability of the French to furnish significant assistance to the military in the face of these difficulties is an indication of the support available from Allied governments even under adverse conditions. By the end of July, the 1st U.S. Army had been required to establish four refugee camps. The rearward movement of civilians through these camps occurred at a fairly constant rate and suitable civilian accommodations for most refugees and all displaced persons had been found in civilian communities within the army rear areas. The French provided personnel to operate the four camps and civil affairs detachment personnel were required only in a supervisory role.

With less success the French government began to supplement its police force; however, the maintenance of law and order was a weak point throughout this period of operations. In addition, the incident resulting in the death of one civilian evacuee could have been prevented by more aggressive military supervision, although this unfortunate incident contributed a valuable lesson to be applied in future operations.

By any standards the initial results achieved by the 1st U.S. Army were successful; however, maximum credit must be given to French cooperation, assistance, and support.

CHAPTER III

THE ADVANCE TO THE SEINE

1 AUGUST 1944 TO 26 AUGUST 1944

Tactical Operations During the Period

At noon on 1 August 1944, 12th U.S. Army Group, under command of Lieutenant General Omar Bradley became operational and assumed control of the 1st and 3d U.S. Armies.¹ The next day General George S. Patton's 3d U.S. Army passed through the right flank of 1st U.S. Army and began a rapid advance.² The Brittany peninsula was cut off by 6 August 1944 and the 3d U.S. Army then turned east. (See Fig. 2)

During the period 6 through 12 August 1944 the Germans launched a counterattack designed to sever the 3d U.S. Army's penetration at its neck. This was blocked by 1st U.S. Army units and Patton's tanks continued to pour through a narrow twenty mile corridor.³ On 13 August the 3d U.S. Army moved north in the direction of Argentan joining forces with the British 2d Army creating the Falaise pocket. Leaving forces behind to contain the Germans in the pocket, the 3d U.S. Army

¹Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. V, n.d., p. 34.

²Ibid.

³R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, Military Heritage of America (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 34-35.

then continued to advance towards Orleans and Mantes.⁴

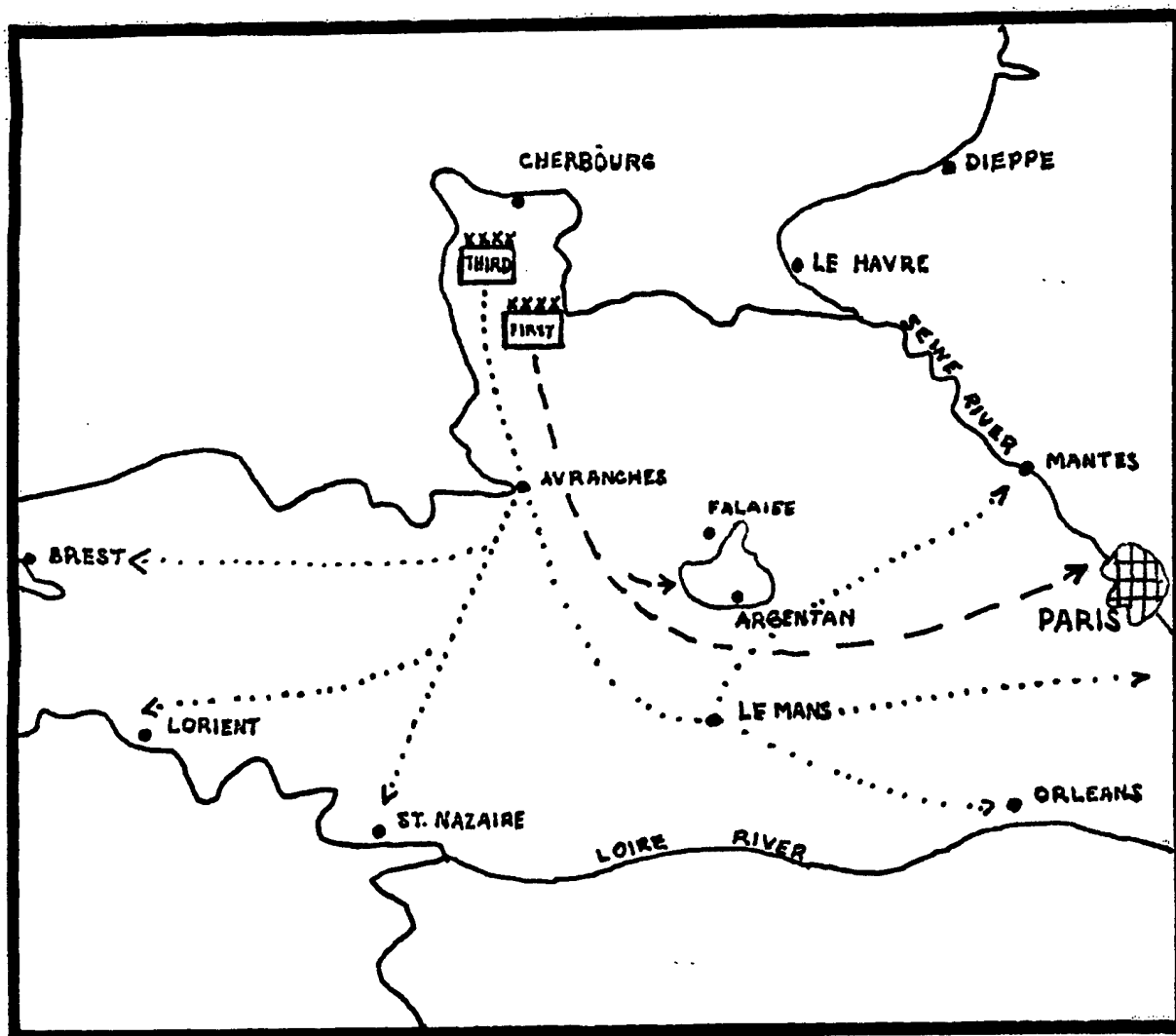


Fig. 2.--Diagram of tactical operations during August, 1944⁵

The 1st U.S. Army followed, assumed responsibility for the Falaise pocket, and moved east towards Paris arriving at the Mantes Bridgehead on 23 August 1944.⁶ Paris fell to the 1st U.S. Army on 25 August 1944.⁷

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 537.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

The 12th U.S. Army Group Begins Operations

During the tactical operations just described, Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group was faced with the prospects of coordinating and supervising the activities of two widely dispersed armies. Since the previous refugee and displaced persons procedures of the 1st U.S. Army appeared to be adequate, no immediate major operational changes were implemented.

On 2 August 1944 the Group issued "G-5 Operational Instructions No. 1"⁸ In general terms, the directive specified that previous instructions issued either by the Supreme Headquarters or the 21st Army Group would remain in force.⁹ Specifically, in regard to refugees and displaced persons this first directive read:

Refugees and Displaced Persons: a. The policy and basis for the control and care of refugees and displaced persons will be in accordance with the provisions of "Outline Plan for Refugees and Displaced Persons" published by Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force.

b. Commanding Generals of armies will arrange for and supervise the movement of refugees and displaced persons from transit points to assembly centers. Military transportation may be used for this purpose.¹⁰

The "Outline Plan" mentioned in "G-5 Operational Instructions Number 1," had been issued by the Supreme Headquarters on 4 June 1944.¹¹ It was published only two days prior to the invasion and its effects on the early Normandy operations were therefore minor. Most of its

⁸Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "G-5 Operational Instructions Number 1," 2 August 1944.

⁹Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 9.

¹¹Headquarters, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, "Outline Plan for Refugees and Displaced Persons," 4 June 1944.

provisions agreed with the pre-invasion refugee and displaced persons plan of the 12th U.S. Army Group. The basic objectives specified in each document were identical and both emphasized that care and control of civilians were responsibilities of Allied national authority subject to the intervention of military commanders for reasons of military necessity.¹²

The "Outline Plan" issued by Supreme Headquarters also contained specific instructions and guidance not found in the original plan of the 12th U.S. Army Group. Included were detailed civilian movement control procedures and considerations concerning the potential employment of personnel from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.¹³ Plans were eventually completed for use of this United Nation's Agency but this support was not available to the 12th U.S. Army Group prior to January 1945; consequently no further mention of this organization will be made.

To control refugee and displaced persons movements the "Outline Plan" directed military commanders to designate evacuation routes. Civilian travel would then be funneled over these selected roads by French officials or combat troops.¹⁴ Directional signs printed in French were to be posted and collecting points established along the evacuation system. Civilians were to be assembled into groups at the collecting points and moved rearward under military escort if necessary. Upon arrival in the rear areas the groups would then be dispersed in local communities.¹⁵

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

During its June and July operations, the 1st U.S. Army did not employ the procedures specified in the "Outline Plan." Whether or not this was an oversight on the part of the 1st U.S. Army's Assistant Chief of Staff, G5 is not contained in historical records of the unit. A more likely assumption is that these provisions were not required. In any event, the "Outline Plan" was implemented shortly after 1 August 1944 throughout the 12th U.S. Army Group's operational zone.

The 12th U.S. Army Group limited its civil affairs functions to the determination of policy.¹⁶ This position permitted maximum freedom of action to the commanders of the 1st and 3d U.S. Armies. It also led to the development of different techniques on the part of each army. The 1st U.S. Army concentrated its civil affairs detachments and generally supervised their activities using the Army G5 staff element.¹⁷ The 3d U.S. Army attached blocks of detachments to the corps and the corps then sent detachments forward to divisions where they were employed under the operational control of the division commanders.¹⁸ Additionally, 3d U.S. Army leapfrogged detachments to keep pace with its relatively rapid advance thus using detachments at more than one location. The 3d U.S. Army's civil affairs detachments remained permanently only in large key governmental centers. In contrast, the 1st U.S. Army normally left most detachments in place once they were employed.¹⁹ These different procedures were not the results of

¹⁶Supra., p. 3.

¹⁷Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. VII, n.d., p. 13.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

differences in the personalities of the commanders or staff officers concerned, but were caused primarily by two entirely different tactical conditions which existed within each army's zone of operations. Meanwhile, Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group began negotiations with the French government designed to resolve the problems first isolated in July.²⁰

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to the development of the various situations just described. The following section develops the significant aspects of the 3d U.S. Army's rapid advance. The third section describes 1st U.S. Army's relatively slower advance and the fourth section covers the results of conferences between Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group and the French Government.

The 3d U.S. Army's Operations

The rapid advance of the 3d U.S. Army resulted in three conditions which varied greatly from events recorded previously pertaining to the 1st U.S. Army's operations in June and July 1944. Communities liberated contained over 50% of their registered populations.²¹ Moreover, damage to public property was comparatively light.²² Finally, large numbers of refugees were encountered in a relatively short period of time.²³ Table 5 reflects the numbers of refugees reported by the

²⁰ Supra., pp. 34-35.

²¹ United States Forces European Theater, "Report of the General Board, Study 35," n.d., p. 5.

²² Headquarters, 3d U.S. Army, "After Action Report," Vol. II, Part 6, n.d., pp. 5-6.

²³ Ibid.

3d U.S. Army during the month of August.

TABLE 5
REFUGEES ENCOUNTERED BY 3d U.S. ARMY
FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST 1944⁸

Week Ending	Number
7 August	45,000
14 August	9,000
21 August	185,000
28 August	406,000

⁸Headquarters, 3d U.S. Army, "After Action Report," Vol. II, Part 6, n.d., pp. 5-6.

It was largely the result of these conditions that the 3d U.S. Army found it necessary to decentralize the control and supervision of its civil affairs detachments.²⁴ Since the rapid advance liberated large areas of France, the civil affairs capabilities of the 3d U.S. Army became seriously stretched. As a consequence, zones of responsibility planned for entire civil affairs companies were by necessity assigned to single detachments.²⁵

Even though the detachment personnel were spread over wide areas and in spite of the impressive numbers of refugees encountered, all billeting requirements which generated were solved by using French facilities.²⁶ More surprisingly, this feat was accomplished without

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

the establishment of a single refugee camp.²⁷

This noteworthy accomplishment was made possible by three conditions--the evacuation plan, the minor war damage to civilian communities, and the assistance provided by the French. The key to success was found in the latter factor since it minimized the expenditure of military resources.

The 3d U.S. Army's evacuation plan was simple, easily executed and enjoyed great success. In general, it conformed to the procedures of the "Outline Plan" issued by the Supreme Headquarters. It was implemented early in August when two civil affairs detachments surveyed potential civilian evacuation routes which had been coordinated previously with both the Army G4 and the Provost Marshal. The Army G5 then selected roads for civilian use which were then marked with directional signs. Civil affairs detachments employed in the forward areas under corps and division control were authorized to select and post signs along additional roads which funneled into the main arteries of evacuation established by the Army G5. Finally the 3d U.S. Army's Provost Marshal was subsequently informed of the evacuation routes established by subordinate units which facilitated the use of military police to channel civilian movements.²⁸

The results of this plan, implemented early in August, were exceptional. Forward civil affairs detachments and military police directed refugee groups to the nearest road designated for civilian use.²⁹ These groups varied in size from a few individuals to over

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

1,000 persons; however, regardless of size they ceased to be a military problem once they entered the evacuation system.³⁰ This was possible due to the cooperation of French authorities who were able to provide food and billets for all personnel moving along the evacuation routes at no expense to the military logistical effort.³¹

Another incident demonstrating the value of French support was found during tactical operations near the city of Brest. Once again French assistance was instrumental in solving a serious problem which occurred. On 14 August 1944, 24,000 residents of Brest were expelled by the Germans.³² To meet this situation the 3d U.S. Army dispatched a civil affairs detachment to the area accompanied by an officer from the Army G5 Staff and a French liaison officer. Upon the arrival of this group, instructions were given to civilian officials of surrounding communities which required them to clear the main highways of transient personnel and direct individuals to towns where housing accommodations were available.³³

Once again the French performed well. All but 6,000 refugees were billeted locally and the remainder were shipped by train to an area where adequate civilian facilities were found.³⁴ Military food stocks were required to feed this large group; consequently the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. VII, p. 70.

³³ Headquarters, 3d U.S. Army, "After Action Report," Vol. II, Part 6, p. 6.

³⁴ Ibid.

detachment issued emergency hard rations consisting of soap, codfish, pulses, biscuits, meat, milk and chocolate, which were prepared and served at feeding stations operated by the French.³⁵ The only military effort expended to meet this problem was the employment of two coordinating personnel and the diversion of a few army food resources. In one week the requirements for military support ceased to exist.

The 3d U.S. Army also performed another important service for Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group. Plans being developed for Paris disclosed that a severe shortage of food for the indigenous citizenry could be anticipated.³⁶ French intelligence reports also indicated that many Paris residents had moved to rural communities surrounding the city. If these citizens were allowed to return to Paris shortly after its liberation, their presence could compound the food deficiency.³⁷

In compliance with a Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group directive, over 100,000 Paris residents were identified within the 3d U.S. Army's zone and orders prohibiting their travel were issued.³⁸ The successful accomplishment of this task was made possible by the active assistance and cooperation of local French governmental officials. Moreover, it helped alleviate a serious situation in the capital city.³⁹

As the 3d U.S. Army closed upon the Seine river and prepared to continue the advance to the east, its first experiences with refugees and displaced persons had presented no major complications. Much of the

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Letter, Colonel Cornelius E. Ryan, G5, 12th U.S. Army Group to Chief of Staff, 12th U.S. Army Group, 27 August 1944.

success was attributable to the favorable environmental conditions which existed in the area of operations; however, most of the credit must be given to the French officials at the city and village levels.

The 1st U.S. Army's Operations

While the 3d U.S. Army was enjoying considerable success in solving problems associated with large numbers of refugees, significant and continuing problems were experienced by the 1st U.S. Army. As the 1st U.S. Army moved east, it also encountered an increasing number of refugees. Its advance was slower and accompanied by a much heavier destruction of civilian property than that found in the 3d U.S. Army's area.⁴⁰ Other problems or events peculiar to the 1st U.S. Army area included the continuing lack of local governmental officials in recently occupied cities, the new requirement for reestablishment of a civilian communications system and the extensive use of captured material to supplement indigenous and military resources.⁴¹ A typical description of conditions existing in the area of operations is contained in a report of the situation found after liberation of the city of St. Lo on 30 July 1944. The main features of the report submitted by the 1st U.S. Army were:⁴²

1. War damage to civilian property in St. Lo was heavy.

⁴⁰United States Forces European Theater, "Report of the General Board, Study 35," p. 6.

⁴¹Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Report of Operations: 1 August 1944-22 February 1945," Vol. II, n.d., pp. 155-74.

⁴²Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 51," 30 July 1944.

2. Local French officials had moved the government out of the city and only fifteen minor governmental officers remained in the city.

3. No local police were available. This required the use of personnel from tactical units to enforce civilian travel restrictions.

Similar conditions existed throughout the 1st U.S. Army's zone of operations. Where previously it had been possible to reestablish civilian government in a matter of hours, it now became a matter of days.⁴³ Civil affairs detachments were employed in an attempt to remedy the situation; however, their efforts were generally unsuccessful.⁴⁴ Moreover, the extensive employment of booby traps by retreating German forces continued to plague the 1st U.S. Army.⁴⁵ These problems continued to exist for the remainder of the month of August 1944, but fortunately the absence of adequate French support was limited to the forward areas.⁴⁶

Faced with the difficulties outlined above, 1st U.S. Army implemented a civilian evacuation system identical to that described in operation within the zone of the 3d U.S. Army.⁴⁷ Due to the absence of French officials in the forward areas and the heavy damage to civilian communities 1st U.S. Army found it necessary to continue the use of collection points and refugee camps. To direct migratory personnel into this control system, the forward divisions and corps were made responsible for the collection of refugees and displaced persons within their

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Combat Operations Data, Europe 1945-46," 18 November 1946, pp. 243-44.

respective operational zones.⁴⁸ Once collected by these forward units, civilians were sent to camps operated under army control. Here they were held until they could be returned to their homes, dispersed within French communities, or sent to French camps in the rear.⁴⁹

The following inspection report of refugee camps in France describes the operations of the 1st U.S. Army. This report read:⁵⁰

In the battle zone, at proximity of the line of battle, SHAEF, organizes transit camps in which all refugees are sent for three or four days, and are then sent to more permanent dwellings. The Free French Volunteers consisting of women are in charge of these camps under the immediate authority of the Allies. . . . Later on, as the front line goes forward, these camps are considered rear camps, the Military authorities transferring all responsibilities of the camps to the French Civil authorities. The people then use the camps as a more permanent place and keep all refugees until homes can be found for them.

The movement of refugees to the rear increased during August despite the absence of French support in the forward areas. By the end of August, over 2,000 civilians were being returned to their homes on a daily basis using military transportation.⁵¹ As a result the number of refugee camps operated by the 1st U.S. Army dropped from the four reported in Chapter II to only two by the end of August 1944.⁵² In

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 242-57.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰M. Forestier, Chief of Mission of French Provisional Government Delegation, copy of report on inspection of refugee camps in France, August 1944, quoted in Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors, U.S. Department of the Army (United States Army in World War II; Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), pp. 849-50.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 75," 20 August 1944.

addition, the total camp population remained at a fairly constant figure averaging approximately 800 residents throughout the month.⁵³

Facilities within the 1st U.S. Army's refugee camps varied dependent upon their locations; however, both included provisions to feed and house the camp residents. Moreover, limited recreational equipment in the form of motion pictures, radios, and athletic equipment was made available from Special Service stocks.⁵⁴ Both camps featured provisions for the security screening and the medical processing of all personnel entering each respective refugee center.⁵⁵ French Liaison officers were also employed to assist counterintelligence corps personnel in conducting the security examinations, which measurably increased the effectiveness of this essential phase of camp operations.⁵⁶

A portion of the effectiveness of the evacuation procedures employed by the 1st U.S. Army was the result of the early reestablishment of the civilian communication system within the area of operations. Early in August 1944 French security and civilian billeting efforts began to be hampered by a lack of indigenous communications means which had resulted from war damages during combat operations. The 1st U.S. Army's actions taken to meet the new problem included--the provision of civil affairs communication facilities to French police as a temporary expedient; the establishment of a civilian motorized courier service

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴ Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Combat Operations Data, Europe 1945-46," 10 November 1946, pp. 242-57.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

between cities supplemented with bicycle messengers within the cities themselves; and the restoration of the French communications circuits.⁵⁷

Captured German equipment was pressed into service and existing French equipment was cannibalized. United States communications resources were also used in last priority. These measures had a rapid and beneficial effect. By 12 August 1944 there was a noticeable improvement in civilian communications.⁵⁸ In addition to enhancing the support capabilities of French officials in the security aspects of civil affairs, this action also facilitated the coordination of civilian movements from the refugee camps to communities in the rear areas.

Another notable achievement of the 1st U.S. Army during its August operations was the extensive use of captured enemy material to satisfy logistical requirements which were generated by refugees. Captured German food stocks were used to feed the civilian personnel within the evacuation system.⁵⁹ In addition, three German mobile field kitchens captured during July were pressed into service.⁶⁰ Moreover, on 17 August 1944 a French hospital was established using medical supplies and ambulances seized from the retreating German armies.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, "Civil Affairs Summary of Field Reports, No. 8," 5 August 1944.

⁵⁸ Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Combat Operations Data, Europe 1944-45" 10 November 1946, pp. 242-47.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 45," 24 July 1944.

⁶¹ Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 72," 17 August 1944.

Although each of the measures discussed above helped to reduce the necessity for diverting military resources to support refugee and displaced persons operations, the most significant use of enemy equipment was recorded in the transportation field. Vehicles were required to move refugees and supplies and, as with most armies, little could be diverted from military resources without creating serious logistical difficulties. Recognizing this problem, the 1st U.S. Army's G5 made arrangements to establish a civil affairs transportation pool made up entirely of captured German equipment.⁶² Eventually, a total of 350 trucks was restored by cannibalization methods.⁶³ These vehicles ranged in size from staff cars to sixteen ton trucks and the use of these vehicles greatly assisted the 1st U.S. Army civil affairs effort.⁶⁴ This captured German equipment was an important factor in the rapid movement of civilians through the evacuation system to French facilities in the rear areas.

Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group Coordinates
with French Officials

In late July 1944, the problems presented by a shortage of French civil police began to reach critical proportions. On 29 July, the 1st U.S. Army reported that French national authorities refused to hire additional police unless the cost was borne by the Allied forces.⁶⁵ In addition the unpaid volunteer police personnel appointed by

⁶²Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Combat Operations Data, Europe 1945-46," pp. 245-46.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 50," 29 July 1944.

local French mayors were not functioning efficiently due both to the inexperience of individuals and the lack of supervision and control by French officials.⁶⁶ This situation was beyond the capabilities of the subordinate armies; consequently, Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group assumed responsibility for coordination with the French on matters of law enforcement and movement control effective 31 July 1944.⁶⁷

Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group faced one serious handicap-- full agreement between the Supreme Headquarters and the French National Committee of Liberation was not reached until late August 1944. The civil administrative role of this French organization headed by General Charles de Gaulle continued to be a topic of debate at the governmental level.

Despite this lack of agreement at higher levels of authority, Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group was successful in coordinating several important civil assistance matters with officials in France who were friendly to the French National Committee of Liberation. Recognized or not, this committee was in a position to influence civil functions in sections of France liberated by the Allied advance. As a result of these conferences, city and village officials received corrective instructions on 5 August 1944 through French channels. These directives required civilian governmental office holders to assist the military in all cases where "evidence indicated a requirement for their

⁶⁶The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, "Civil Affairs Summary of Field Reports, No. 8."

⁶⁷Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 52," 31 July 1944.

services."⁶⁸ This was hardly an improvement since the determination of the need for civil support remained the prerogative of the French. More importantly, the French officials were also authorized to assume control of citizens arrested by the military for violations of movement control restrictions.⁶⁹ Moreover, French courts began to operate in most areas on 7 August 1944 and a fine not to exceed 120 francs was established as a deterrent to unauthorized civilian travel.⁷⁰ This strengthening of civil law and order proved to be of major importance during future operations.

The French also established a civilian identification system on 7 August 1944. Three different classifications of French citizens were identified and separate cards were issued by local mayors for each category. Criteria used to divide the population into three segments were:⁷¹

1. Citizens whose residency was clearly established.
2. Refugees whose residency status was in doubt.
3. Persons whose morality was in doubt.

Although, these three civilian classification categories do not appear to be mutually exclusive, in actual practice they proved to be just that. Individuals of doubtful morality were detained by civil

⁶⁸ Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 8," 5 August 1944.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 63," 8 August 1944.

⁷¹ Ibid.

authorities regardless of their particular residency status. Their travel was not permitted.

All of these measures implemented by the French contributed to both the military and civilian efforts to regulate the movement of the indigenous population; however, insufficient French police for control point operations remained a serious problem until late August 1944.⁷²

Another major beneficial step was taken on 25 August 1944 when the final agreement concerning the administration of civil affairs in France was reached between the Supreme Headquarters and the French National Committee of Liberation.⁷³ The terms of this agreement conformed closely to procedures anticipated by the Supreme Headquarters when the original civil affairs directives had been issued. An expansion of the civil police force followed shortly thereafter which solved a major deficiency permanently insofar as operations in France were concerned.

Summary

The following observations of the 12th U.S. Army Group's August operations can be made:

1. During a period of rapid advance accompanied by minor destruction to civilian communities, the 3d U.S. Army uncovered thousands of refugees in a short period of time. These numerous civilians were controlled with a minimum expenditure of military effort. This was

⁷²The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, "Civil Affairs Weekly Summary No. 11," 26 August 1944.

⁷³Agreement between the French National Committee for Liberation and Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, quoted in United States Forces European Theater, Study 33, n.d., p. 5.

primarily the result of the assistance received from French officials.

2. The 1st U.S. Army experienced problems of a greater magnitude during its slower advance through heavily damaged civilian communities. A greater civil affairs effort was required in the forward areas since local governmental officials were not immediately available upon liberation of the community concerned. In spite of these adverse conditions, the French continued to provide adequate support once dislocated nationals were moved to the rear. Effective civilian communications were found to be essential and their speedy restoration enhanced the support capabilities of the French Government. Finally, the use of captured German equipment both for civil affairs transportation and reestablishment of indigenous medical facilities served to limit expenditures of military resources.

3. At Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, no major operational changes to existing procedures were directed. Conferences between the army group and French officials produced some results immediately beneficial including the establishment of the civilian identification system and the restoration of the French judicial system; however, adequate civil police support was not received until the end of August 1944.

CHAPTER IV

THE ADVANCE TO AND OPERATIONS ALONG THE GERMAN FRONTIER

26 AUGUST TO 15 JANUARY 1945

The German Army did not establish an effective defensive line along the Seine River; consequently, this obstacle did not slow the Allied advance. As the Germans withdrew across France, they left substantial garrisons behind defending the critical seaports of Brest, St. Nazaire, Lorient, Dieppe, and La Havre.¹ The 1st and 3d U.S. Armies pushed rapidly to the northeast crossing the Marne and Aisne rivers on 29 August 1944.² (See Fig. 3)

Upon crossing the Aisne the 1st U.S. Army turned north to Mons and reached the Belgium frontier on 2 September 1944. Liege, Belgium, fell on 8 September and by 11 September the 1st U.S. Army had occupied Luxembourg and entered Germany.³ Further south, the 3d U.S. Army overran Reims and Chalons and then turned east reaching Verdun on 1 September.⁴ By 7 September the 3d U.S. Army had crossed the Moselle River.⁵ Upon reaching the border of Germany the 12th U.S. Army Group

¹R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, Military Heritage of America (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 533-44.

²Ibid.

³Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. V, n.d., pp. 33-37.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

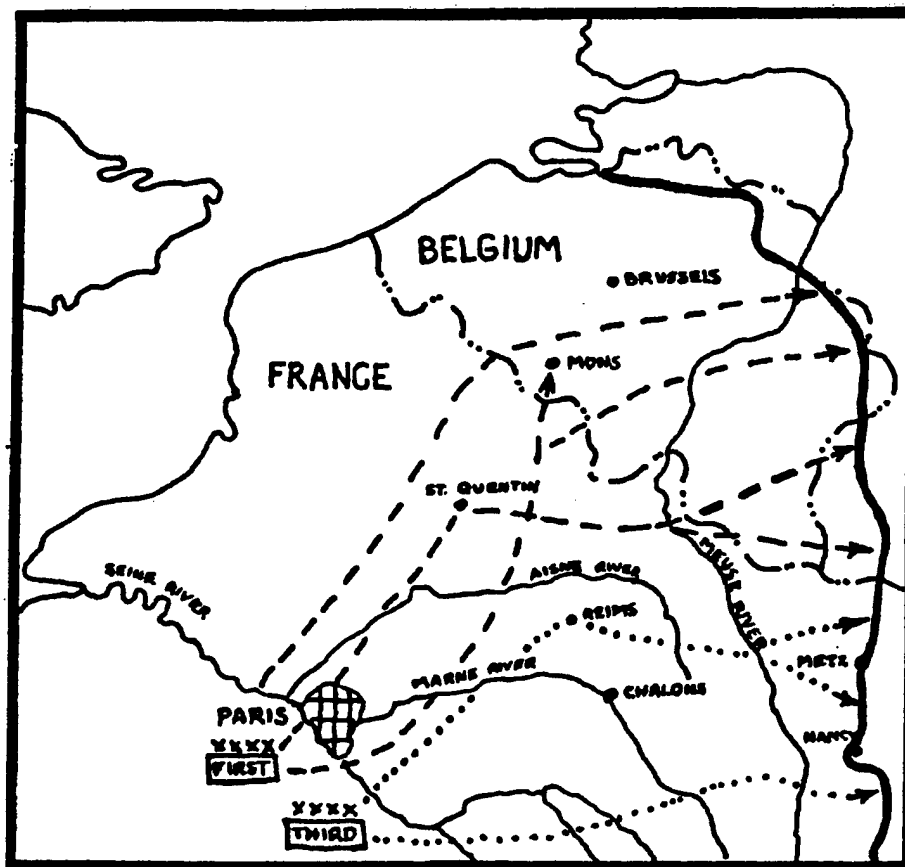


Fig. 3.--Diagram of the 12th U.S. Army Group's⁶ advance from the Seine River to the German border

halted its advance in accordance with a Supreme Headquarters decision to improve the Allied logistical situation. Minor tactical operations designed to improve Allied disposition for future operations took place while military units reorganized and prepared to continue the advance into Germany.⁷

⁶Dupuy and Dupuy, p. 543.

⁷Ibid., pp. 543-44.

As the combat elements of the 12th U.S. Army Group continued their advance across the remainder of France, refugee and displaced persons operations did not change from those reported previously in Chapter III. This situation was altered once the 12th U.S. Army Group's units reached the eastern French border, crossed Belgium and Luxembourg, and began a two month period of static operations. Table 6 is a summary of the numbers of both refugees and displaced persons reported by the 12th U.S. Army Group from September through 20 November 1944. This table reflects an increase in the numbers of personnel quartered in camps and the appearance of displaced persons in significant numbers.

Just as was reported during breakout operations, the 1st and 3d U.S. Armies also encountered significantly different problems during the period of static operations. The 3d U.S. Army halted along the French-German border while the 1st U.S. Army liberated Belgium and Luxembourg and stopped after capturing a small section of Germany. The 3d U.S. Army was able to continue operations enjoying the assistance of the French Government; however, the 1st U.S. Army was dependent upon the support of two civilian governments which were not able to duplicate the aid formerly received from the French.

Problems arose during this period of static operations; however, these difficulties were not limited to the 1st U.S. Army's operations in Belgium and Luxembourg. The overall plan which placed maximum reliance upon civilian governments began to develop serious shortcomings. Food necessary to feed Europe's dislocated citizenry was no longer available exclusively from indigenous resources. In addition, the return of

eastern Europeans to their homelands developed into a military responsibility, a problem compounded by the lack of a repatriation agreement between the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. All of these deficiencies were factors influencing a decision to reorganize civil affairs elements to give emphasis to displaced persons operations.

TABLE 6

NUMBERS OF REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS
IN 12TH U.S. ARMY GROUP
18 SEPTEMBER 1944 TO 20 NOVEMBER 1944^h

Date	Number in Camps	Estimated Number	
		Refugees	Displaced Persons
18 September	. . .	284,000	11,000
26 September	. . .	256,900	11,630
2 October	7,178	266,000	10,705
9 October	10,488	276,488	19,251
16 October	23,518	289,000	21,601
23 October	26,397	243,518	23,569
30 October	26,985	248,000	23,216
6 November	27,404	240,000	20,936
13 November	30,522	255,000	16,880
20 November	33,937	260,000	19,650

^hHeadquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. VII, n.d., p. 27.

Another important feature of the 12th U.S. Army Group's operations along the western borders of Germany began on 15 December 1944 when the Germans launched their famous counterattack through the Ardennes. In a brief period the 12th U.S. Army Group was forced into a retrograde movement accompanied by a large scale redistribution of major combat forces. Control of the citizenry was critical during this period and all civil affairs staffs and detachments were faced with one of their most serious problems in Europe.

The remainder of this chapter will develop the aspects of the various problems discussed briefly above. Once again the 1st and 3d U.S. Armies' operations will each be presented in a separate section. A discussion of the civil affairs reorganization will follow, again in a separate section. The last section discusses the problems encountered during the short but violent German counter-offensive.

The 3d U.S. Army's Experiences with
Refugees and Displaced Persons
26 August 1944 to 15 December 1944

During the 3d U.S. Army's rapid advance across France to the German border, no major problems resulted from the appearance of refugees or displaced persons. The discovery of refugees by the thousands was a common occurrence throughout the zone of the 3d U.S. Army; however, both French and Allied civil affairs personnel had jointly developed an effective evacuation system. The number of detachments, refugee camps, and collecting centers required to meet these conditions were increased, but operational methods actually employed did not change. Refugees continued to be assembled in forward areas and moved through collecting

centers to camps. Subsequently, they were returned to their homes, dispersed within civilian communities or moved further to the rear where French refugee facilities were available.

After the 3d U.S. Army's advance was halted at the German border, a problem began to develop as refugees attempted to return to their by-passed homes. It will be recalled that similar experiences had been encountered by the 1st U.S. Army during its Normandy operations; however, the appearance of this condition a second time was accompanied by a tremendous increase in the total numbers involved.⁸ A typical description of conditions which existed is reflected in the following report submitted by XX Corps, a 3d U.S. Army unit. This report reads:

In the period covered by this summary a total of 40,000 French refugees were returned from the forward areas to their homes either within the corps area or to the rear of the corps area, of which 8,700 were transported by military transportation . . . To assist in the return of French refugees to the Thionville and Metz areas, transitory refugee points were operated at both of the aforesaid towns, utilizing in addition to Civil Affairs personnel, personnel of French MFLA teams [See p. 64]. At these two transitory points, refugees arriving late in the day can be cared for overnight until arrangements can be made for return to their residences. French Red Cross and French MFLA personnel were also utilized to good advantage in arranging to have refugees in a town ready for evacuation when the transport arrives. Valuable transit time is saved in this manner.⁹

In addition to receiving assistance from the French to evacuate and resettle refugees, the XX U.S. Corps also reported significant

⁸Headquarters European Theater, U.S. Forces, "Report of the General Board, Study 35," n.d., p. 6.

⁹Headquarters XX U.S. Corps, "Historical Report of G-5 for December 1944," 7 January 1944, quoted in Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors, U.S. Department of the Army (United States Army in World War II; Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), pp. 854-55.

French aid in matters pertaining to security and enforcement of travel restrictions. The following information concerning both these measures was contained in the same report just quoted above:

Closely allied with the refugee and displaced persons problem was that of restricting civilian circulation on the highways in the Corps area. The limitation of civil affairs circulation passes to the minimum does not of itself solve the question of keeping civilians off the road. . . . Through cooperation with French civilian authorities, French Gendarmes were secured and placed at strategic points for the purpose of denying the use of the highways to unauthorized civilians. This system serves as a security measure in addition to being an aid in the control of civilian circulation. As a further aid in the control of civilian circulation arrangements were made for a French Civilian Summary Court in Metz for the purpose of prosecuting violators of circulation restrictions.¹⁰

The French MMLA teams mentioned above were units of the French Mission Militaire Liaison Administratif.¹¹ These teams were small units of the French Army and each element varied in size from four to seven persons. Most members of the organization were women, but each team was assigned at least one male driver. Team members enjoyed officer or non-commissioned officer status and they had been recruited and organized specifically for duties associated with refugees and displaced persons.¹² By December of 1944 sixteen MMLA teams were assigned to the area occupied by the 3d U.S. Army.¹³

The forward units of the 3d U.S. Army also received other

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹United States Forces, European Theater, "Report of the General Board, Study 35," pp. 6-7.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. VII, n.d., pp. 72-73.

assistance from the French. Villages to which civilians could be returned consistent with military operations were reported to French officials. A village cadre, which normally included the town mayor, some skilled craftsmen, and cattle tenders was then appointed by the French.¹⁴ After the cadre had been screened both by French officials and U.S. intelligence personnel, it was sent into its home village. Upon arrival this cadre began to repair war damaged buildings beginning with houses which required the least restoration effort. Concurrently, the livestock in the area was collected to provide an indigenous food source. In the 3d Army area alone over 575 such cadre were returned to their home villages during the month of November 1944.¹⁵

The events just described indicated the degree of sophistication of the joint Allied-French system providing both for the care and control of French citizens. This system had developed gradually since the initial invasion and had enjoyed considerable success. In general, the French were willing and able to assume complete responsibility for their own citizens. On the other hand, the 3d U.S. Army and other Allied units were faced with a different problem when dealing with millions of displaced persons.

The initial appearances of displaced persons during the operations along the German frontier began on a low note. On the night of

¹⁴Headquarters United States Forces European Theater, "Report of the General Board, Study No. 35," p. 6.

¹⁵Headquarters, 3d U.S. Army, "After Action Report," Vol. II, Part 6, n.d., p. 18.

12 September 1944, the 3d U.S. Army reported 100 homeless men, a few women, and 9 children, all of whom were classified as displaced persons.¹⁶ This was the beginning of what would eventually become a flood of homeless European nationals. The numbers rose to 1,500 by the 15th of September and the first civil affairs detachment employed exclusively for displaced persons operations was assigned a mission to provide for these personnel.¹⁷ All countries of Europe were represented in this group; however, Ukrainian Russians were by far the most numerous among these nationalities.¹⁸ By the end of September, the 3d U.S. Army had four displaced persons camps in operation which contained approximately 7,000 persons and significant numbers of Poles, Yugoslavians, Spaniards, Czechoslovakians, and Dutch personnel had joined the Russians.¹⁹

The French provided valuable assistance in operating the camps established by the 3d U.S. Army. One French Liaison Officer was sent to each camp accompanied by one MMLA team.²⁰ Later, in October 1944, arrangements were completed to ship displaced persons from these forward camps to French facilities within the communications zone. As a result, the 3d U.S. Army's camps in the forward areas became nothing more than transit points.²¹

In November similar procedures were used to evacuate 10,984 displaced persons through the 3d U.S. Army's zone of operations to French operated facilities.²² Polish Liaison Officers and American Red Cross personnel joined the French officers and welfare teams working in

¹⁶Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 11.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 14.

²²Ibid., p. 18.

the forward displaced persons camps.

The conclusions which can be drawn from this description of the 3d U.S. Army's experiences along the French-German border are obvious. The effective system developed for refugee operation was simply applied to displaced persons. A slight increase in the military effort was recorded; however, the support received from the French continued to be of major importance. Thus to develop the problems described earlier, attention must be turned to the 1st U.S. Army.

The 1st U.S. Army's Experiences with
Refugees and Displaced Persons
26 August 1944 to 15 December 1944

In spite of some shortcomings, the refugee and displaced persons activities of the 12th U.S. Army Group in France had been aided considerably by governmental officials and agencies at all levels. It is not surprising therefore that an attempt was made to apply identical methods in Belgium and Luxembourg. In Belgium, these efforts were seriously hampered initially due to the difficulties encountered in reestablishing effective civil governments. Difficulties centered primarily around the existence of resistance groups in direct competition with each other concerning which organization represented the true civilian government.

The initial Belgian civil affairs directive issued by the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force and covering the terms of an agreement with the Belgian government in exile, was published on

1 September 1944.²³ The intent to employ measures similar to those which had been successful in France was reflected in this directive. Military commanders were given full responsibility and authority in the initial phase, but the Belgian government in exile would assume overall control when practicable shortly after liberation.²⁴ The authority of the military commanders was limited somewhat since the military civil administration was prohibited from establishing procedures "national in character" which included "price or wage controls, rationing, currency, establishment of courts, or the supervision or appointment of national officials."²⁵ This directive also specified the use of Belgian military officers to assist in the civil affairs aspects of operations in Belgium. These officers were to be attached and incorporated into the civil affairs organization of the army groups concerned.²⁶ Another important aspect of the initial policy directive was the announcement of the future appointment of a Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Mission to the Belgian government. The principal duty of this mission was specified as the transmission of the "Supreme Commander's needs with respect to civil administration and the utilization of Belgian resources."²⁷

This was a noticeable change from previous procedures employed prior to the invasion in respect to agreements with civilian governmental authorities. Obviously the agreement was designed to forestall

²³The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, Directive to Headquarters Northern Group of Armies and Commander-in-Chief Central Group of Armies, 1 September 1944, quoted in Coles and Weinberg, p. 800.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

the difficulties which had been encountered in France, but the political instability of the Belgian government seriously undermined any effectiveness that this agreement may have had.

The Belgian mission from the Supreme Headquarters arrived in Brussels on 10 September 1944. It was organized as a military headquarters commanded by a major general and contained G1, G2, G3, G4, and G5 staff sections.²⁸ Its first report of conditions in Belgium outlined two significant problem areas which directly influenced the capabilities of the Belgian government to render assistance to the Allied refugee and displaced persons effort. First, the civil police forces were unarmed and handicapped in their activities by the existence of several large armed resistance groups, some of which had political ambitions. In addition, the internal communications system was practically non-existent. These difficulties with resistance groups were reflected in a report submitted by a civil affairs detachment employed with the 1st U.S. Army. This report read:

As the civil affairs detachment moved forward into Belgium in the wake of the armored columns, they were confronted with a problem they had never met in France--that of coordinating several distinctly different Resistance Groups operating actively in the area. The French Resistance Groups had all been united . . . before the invasion, thereby presenting a single authoritative leadership that could be dealt with easily by the Allies and was in a better position to give aid. Those in Belgium, however, had not reached that date in development when the Allies arrived. The Resistance was active, more so than in most parts of northern France--but its efficiency was thwarted by the very fact that there was no control authority to guide its actions, and one group

²⁸ Cable, SHAEF Mission Belgium to Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan, Deputy Chief of Staff, SHAEF, 10 September 1944, quoted in Coles and Weinberg, p. 804.

frequently served as a stumbling block for another while both were trying to accomplish the same objective.²⁹

The same detachment report described the existence of three resistance groups large enough to influence conditions in Belgium. The Armee Secrete was described as a military organization. It was led by Belgian officers who had no political ambitions and it was the movement with which the Allies had made plans for final authority in Belgium.³⁰ The Front de l'Independance was composed of members representing the laboring classes with strong communistic tendencies.³¹ The third resistance movement was represented by the Mouvement National Belge composed of leading jurists, statesmen, Catholics and others with political ambitions towards the extreme right.³²

The resistance groups just described were a great assistance in the initial liberation of Belgium both in the support of military operations and civilian control measures. They cleared pockets of bypassed resistance and actually liberated many areas without military assistance. They also provided guards to civil affairs detachments and personnel for the direction of traffic which helped keep civilians off roads required for military use.

The difficulties began after liberation when the different resistance groups began attempts to reestablish local governmental machinery in accordance with their particular political beliefs. The different groups began rounding up collaborators recorded on their

²⁹Annex A, Historical Report, 1st U.S. Army, 1-30 September 1944, quoted in Coles and Weinberg, p. 802.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

particular black lists and invariably some members of other resistance groups were included. Many Belgian citizens were beaten and incarcerated without the benefit of any resemblance of a judicial trial or hearing.³³ In addition, many towns had three different groups all claiming recognition as the representative of the true Belgian government. The local police were handicapped and hesitant to reestablish law and order. Moreover, the total force of 6,000 law enforcement officers were unarmed and faced the unhappy prospect of dealing with an estimated 70,000 well armed and aggressive members of the various resistance groups.³⁴

In Luxembourg the policy of the Supreme headquarters was announced in a letter sent to the 12th U.S. Army Group on 30 September 1944. This letter reads:

In the execution of the policy of the Supreme Commander towards refugees and displaced persons the assistance of Luxembourg national and communal governments will be utilized to the greatest extent practicable. Responsibilities will normally be discharged through the Luxembourg authorities concerned. If, however, these authorities in any area, for any reason are unable to carry out these requirements, CA Detachments will take such direct action as may be required by military necessity.³⁵

To begin the execution of this policy, a mission from the

³³Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Report of Operations: 1 August 1944-22 February 1945," Vol. II, n.d., p. 164.

³⁴Letter, Major General George W. Erskine, Chief, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, Mission to Belgium, to the Supreme Commander, dated 21 October 1944, quoted in Coles and Weinberg, p. 806.

³⁵Letter from the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force to the Commander-in-Chief, 21st Army Group and Commanding General, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Civil Affairs Belgium," 30 September 1944.

Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force was sent into Luxembourg arriving on station early in September 1944. Its initial report describing conditions paralleled those discussed earlier in Belgium-- food was scarce and civilian communications did not exist. One important difference was found. In Belgium reestablishment of the civil government was hampered by politics, but in Luxembourg, it was influenced by the form of government imposed upon Luxembourg during the German occupation.³⁶ The Germans had completely eliminated the pre-war Luxembourg government and installed one of their own. In addition, the country had been redistricted and both the basic functions and individual responsibilities of governmental agencies had been altered. In addition, as the Germans withdrew they took their appointed bureaucrats with them accompanied by important civil records. Consequently, when the 1st U.S. Army civil affairs personnel were able to locate former mayors and other public office holders the former civil leaders invariably had been out of office for a period of four years. Moreover, when these men were reinstalled they were forced to function without the benefit of governmental records.³⁷ Two resistance groups were also encountered in Luxembourg; however, the 1st U.S. Army was able to arbitrate their differences. Beginning in September active steps were taken to reestablish civilian authority. These actions culminated in late November when government bureaus were established and police

³⁶The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, Luxembourg Mission, Report 3-15, September 1944, quoted in Coles and Weinberg, p. 806.

³⁷Ibid.

forces armed with captured German rifles were formed.³⁸ Other than a general lack of food, by early December the civil government in Luxembourg was able to provide support to the 12th U.S. Army Group's refugee and displaced persons activities, but not to the extent formerly given by the French.³⁹

The experiences of the 1st U.S. Army in Belgium and Luxembourg, recorded while confronted with the difficulties discussed previously, are significant. Refugees and displaced persons began to present more aggravated problems. Both military security and the enforcement of civilian travel restrictions generated requirements which demanded an ever increasing diversion of military resources. However, important support for refugees continued to be received from civilian governments concerned.

During the campaign which liberated Belgium and Luxembourg, the 1st U.S. Army uncovered tremendous numbers of refugees. In the period 24-26 September 1944, one corps of the 1st U.S. Army encountered 30,000 refugees; however, the employment of procedures common to those used during operations in France prevented these civilians from developing into a billeting problem of major proportions.⁴⁰ Civilians were directed to designated evacuation routes and "all available buildings along these routes were used to house the refugees."⁴¹ By the end of

³⁸The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 25," 2 December 1944.

³⁹Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Report of Operations: 1 August 1944-22 February 1945," Vol. II, pp. 155-69.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 163.

⁴¹Ibid.

October, after operations had developed into static conditions, 150,000 refugees and displaced persons were reported as being present in the 1st U.S. Army's area, but only 15,000 were housed within army installations.⁴² Similar conditions were also reported at the end of November and civilian personnel housed within military facilities had decreased to 12,000.⁴³ In addition, the Belgians also provided welfare organization support for both refugees and displaced persons. Although there was not an agency corresponding to the French Mission Militaire Liaison Administratif, the Belgian Red Cross did furnish significant assistance. A report of the December operations of Type D Civil Affairs Detachment employed in the 12th U.S. Army Group's zone reads:

In the work with refugees and DP's, the assistance of a detachment of the Belgian Red Cross was of greatest help. The detachment included 2 doctors, a nurse, a pharmacist, and several Red Cross workers . . . They were instrumental in obtaining necessary supplies thru local authorities, and all refugee centers were visited regularly by doctors or nurses to give whatever medical attention was needed.⁴⁴

In spite of this apparent success, significant problem areas also developed. The 1st U.S. Army, like the 3d U.S. Army, was faced with a necessity to resettle civilians in their homes when permitted by tactical operations. While the 3d U.S. Army experienced few problems in this area, the 1st U.S. Army encountered difficulties. In November, the 1st U.S. Army requisitioned civilian facilities to be used for housing of military personnel stationed to the rear of divisional zone

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴"History of Detachment CA/MG DIGI for December 1944," quoted in the U.S. Department of the Army, Field Operations of Military Government Units, by the Civil Affairs Division (Washington, D.C.: January 1949), p. 64.

boundaries.⁴⁵ This action moved many 1st U.S. Army troops into civilian domiciles and prevented the return of 5,000 Belgian citizens to their homes. More importantly, it required the establishment of additional camps to care for personnel who normally would have been removed from the category of individuals whose care was a complete military responsibility. Compounding this problem was the evacuation of German citizens and other residents of the forward combat zone which filled Belgium and Luxembourg to capacity by December of 1944.⁴⁶

Housing was not the only problem confronting the 1st U.S. Army. In October, the shortage of food for the civilian populace became serious and remained acute throughout the remainder of the period. Adequate indigenous rations were available; however, due primarily to the lack of an organized internal civil distribution system, the citizens of Belgium remained underfed. Moreover, the Belgian Government did not take aggressive steps to counteract this deficiency during the period covered by this thesis.

Civilian circulation control also developed into a problem area which eventually required the employment of military patrols along roads.⁴⁷ During a ten day period early in December conditions deteriorated to such an extent that 115 roving patrols and 131 checkpoints were required in one corps area alone.⁴⁸ These patrols and checkpoints

⁴⁵Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Report of Operations: 1 August 1944-22 February 1945," Vol. II, p. 159.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 155-65.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 168.

⁴⁸Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Civil Affairs Summary No. 202," 27 December 1944.

were manned by United States Army personnel and similar methods were also applied in other areas which included the American force's share of Belgium and all of Luxembourg. These measures were successful in controlling the civilian population; however, all of the many civil deficiencies, which continued to plague the 1st U.S. Army, were indications that an increasing amount of the military resources would be required in future civil affairs operations. These conditions were factors contributing to a decision to overhaul the civil affairs organization. This reorganization, which began during this period of static operation, was one that continued after the German defeat in World War II.

Displaced Persons Considerations Require
a Major Revision of Plans

It will be recalled that the "Study of anticipated conditions for France" which had been prepared by the 12th U.S. Army Group prior to the invasion contained an assumption that displaced persons were expected to have become partially adapted to the area in which they had been dislocated. When all the plans and procedures implemented by Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group are considered jointly, the importance of this early assumption is apparent. It had been anticipated that displaced persons could be controlled by methods identical to those employed for refugees. Inherent in this assumption was the expectation that displaced persons would be responsive to instructions received from Allied military forces and that sufficient facilities were available within liberated countries to provide adequate housing, food, and the other essentials of life.

The initial appearance of displaced persons in the zone of the

12th U.S. Army Group produced conditions which effectively undermined this Allied assumption concerning displaced persons procedures. These significant developments were the discoveries that displaced persons were not settled in the area to which they had been dislocated and they did not respond to "standfast directives." They also reflected group mental attitudes which included thoughts of revenge and exultation in addition to demonstrating a strong tendency to appropriate private property. These conditions were labeled "liberation complex" by World War II civil affairs personnel and were described in the 12th U.S. Army Group's after action report. This report reads:

As the numbers of displaced persons increased reports reaching 12th Group Headquarters from subordinate echelons indicated a common practice of displaced persons to shoot or evade their German guards, reverse direction and start marching west. When met by advancing Allied troops these personnel were exhibiting "liberation complex" with evidences of great joy accompanied by considerable consumption of alcoholic beverages and a disposition to appropriate whatever caught their fancy. Control was difficult.⁴⁹

This description of displaced persons' attitudes, common throughout the entire zone of the 12th U.S. Army Group, cast serious doubts upon the capabilities of the recently liberated governments, particularly since early estimates made by the Supreme Headquarters placed over 7,000,000 displaced persons inside Germany.⁵⁰ The western European nations would be hard pressed to provide for their own dislocated nationals returning from inside Germany and could not assume

⁴⁹ Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. VII, p. 78.

⁵⁰ The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, "Outline Plan for Refugees and Displaced Persons," 4 June 1944.

responsibility for personnel from other nations.

Other factors also contributed to the major revision of the entire civil affairs organization within the 12th U.S. Army Group, not the least of which, was the problem of repatriation of displaced persons from the eastern European countries. If the recently liberated governments of France, Belgium and Luxembourg could not provide necessary care and control to these personnel the only logical conclusion which could be reached was one which called for the military to assume complete responsibility.

Although the sheer numbers of displaced persons were major factors leading to the reorganization of civil affairs units, perhaps the greatest single contributory consideration was found in the political aspects of repatriation. The major combatant nations in Europe, the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, were vitally concerned over the status afforded their displaced nationals. Russia, in particular, was the most apprehensive on the matter of return of its citizens as evidenced in the terms of the Yalta agreement of 18 February 1945. This international stipulation not only precluded the transfer of responsibility for the care and repatriation of displaced Soviet citizens to liberated governments, it also prescribed repatriation regardless of the personal desires of the individual concerned.⁵¹

Thus, while France provided excellent support to the 12th U.S.

⁵¹The Provost Marshal General's School, Training Pamphlet No. 53, "Displaced Persons, Occupation Force in Europe Series, 1945-1946," n.d., p. 51.

Army Group for refugee operations, Belgium's and Luxembourg's refugee efforts were less successful; however, the appearances of displaced persons produced requirements of a magnitude which not only was beyond the capabilities of all three nations, but also prohibited by a high level political agreement.

To complete the study of the 12th U.S. Army Group's experiences, the role of the Allied governments during the German counterattack must be examined. This is the subject of the final section of this chapter which follows.

The German Counteroffensive

On 16 December 1944 Germany launched a determined effort to reverse the increasing Allied pressure which threatened the heart-land of the Third Reich. A Nazi force of twenty-four divisions launched a furious counterattack against the forward elements of the 1st U.S. Army.⁵² Since the 1st U.S. Army's troops were in dispersed defensive positions and bad weather neutralized Allied air superiority, the attack enjoyed considerable initial success. (See Fig. 4) A penetration was created through the 1st U.S. Army forward units on a wide front and the assault effectively split the combat forces of the 12th U.S. Army Group. After a period of ten days the penetration included the northern half of Luxembourg and extended far into Belgium.⁵³

The Allied forces reacted quickly to stem the German advance. The command and control problems resulting from the penetration of the 12th U.S. Army Group were solved by assigning all combat forces north

⁵² Dupuy and Dupuy, pp. 549-51.

⁵³ Ibid.

of the penetration to the 21st Army Group.⁵⁴ Available reserve forces were employed to block the flanks of the penetration and the tide of battle began to change on 22 December 1944 when General Patton's 3d Army began to engage the southern flank of the salient.⁵⁵ Moreover, the weather improved on the following day and Allied air power began to take a heavy toll.⁵⁶ In January the counterattack had been thrown back and the Allies were prepared to initiate an advance destined to reduce all organized German resistance.⁵⁷

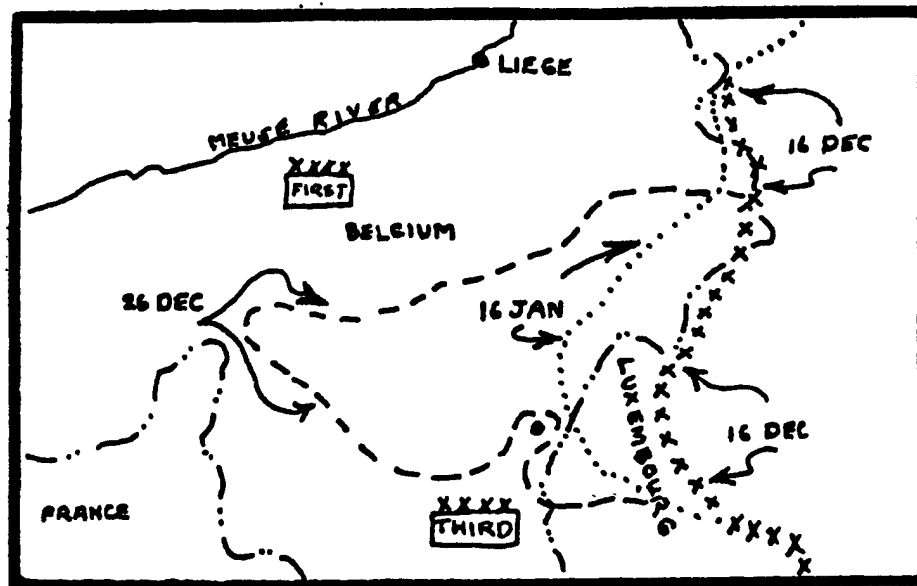


Fig. 4.--Diagram of tactical operations during the German counterattack.⁵⁸

At Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, the German attack of 10 December 1944 happened to coincide with the arrival of the officer assigned to head the newly formed Refugees and Displaced Persons

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 550.

Branch.⁵⁹ Here was a real baptism of fire. The newly arrived officer was immediately beseiged with telephone calls from subordinate commands requesting assistance with refugees, to include matters pertaining to quarters, movement, and rationing.

Immediate answers to these questions were not provided by the 12th U.S. Army Group's Displaced Persons Branch; however, steps were taken to develop the extent and scope of the problem. By 21 December 1944, the 12th U.S. Army Group's estimates of the numbers of refugees expected to result from the combat operations were placed at 200,000.⁶⁰ Of these it was estimated that 100,000 could be dispersed in local communities outside the immediate combat zone, a consideration of doubtful value since billeting facilities were already in short supply, but feasible since military troops were removed from civilian billets and dislocated to the rear. Arrangements were also made with the Communication Zone to provide emergency accomodations for 300,000 refugees.⁶¹

The actions of the Displaced Persons Branch of the 12th U.S. Army Group were commendable, but the plans described above were never implemented. It was simply beyond the capabilities of the Army Group Headquarters to provide immediate answers and solutions for problems resulting from such a rapidly developing situation which had not been anticipated. Had the German advance continued, the efforts of the army group may have proved to be beneficial.

⁵⁹ Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "Report of Operations," Vol. VII, p. 72.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Similar confusion reigned at Headquarters 1st and 3d Armies. In the 1st Army area 15,000 refugees were reported as being evacuated during the German counterattack.⁶² In contrast, Headquarters 3d U.S. Army reported only 3,000 refugees as a direct result of civilians fleeing ahead of the attacking German armies.⁶³

This great disparity in the numbers is directly attributable to the actions of corps, division, and lower unit commanders, who assisted by individual civil affairs detachments, solved immediate and serious problems of population control before they became matters of concern to higher headquarters. Allied governments also provided aid during the retrograde; however, it was centered primarily at the local level. Village and city officials were informed of restrictions placed upon civilian travel which were designed to hold the populations of Belgium and Luxembourg in place.⁶⁴ Civil affairs detachments remained in place until forced to depart by the threat of immediate capture which helped to prevent the development of wide scale mass panic.⁶⁵ Local police were also pressed into service to keep roads free for military use.⁶⁶ More importantly, unit commanders took aggressive steps to remove civilians from areas where they presented a threat to successful

⁶² Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Combat Operations Data Europe 1944-45," 18 November 1946, pp. 244-46.

⁶³ Headquarters, 12th U.S. Army Group, "After Action Report, December 1944-January 1945."

⁶⁴ Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army "Report of Operations: 1 August 1944-22 February 1945," Book II, Annex 3, pp. 155-70.

⁶⁵ Headquarters, 3d U.S. Army "After Action Report," Vol. II, Part 6, p. 20.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

military operations. The December report of a Type D detachment stationed in the 1st U.S. Army area reflects the conditions which existed. This report reads:

From 20 December to end of the month, this detachment was concerned with four main divisions of work: public safety, billeting of army units, care of refugees and movement of food supplies into the area.

As a first measure of public safety, road patrols were maintained by members of the detachment . . . These were usually made twice each day, and involved stopping of civilians travelling on roads, questioning them, checking identity papers and in case of suspicion, turning them in to local authorities. Considerable information of enemy movements was obtained from this source and made available to tactical units. For some time this detachment was isolated, with no army unit of any kind between Bertrix and the Germans . . .

The civilian population of villages under our control were, at several times, in a panicky state, and immediate efforts had to be made to calm them. At our direction, in Bertrix, two proclamations were published through the bourgmestre [sic] giving the people information of the military situation and cautioning them to remain in their homes and not to flee. On one occasion, a copy of a BBC Newscast was translated into French and posted in several places in the town. These measures were necessary to prevent jamming the roads with refugees and interfering with military traffic.

On the 20 December when one of our patrols entered St. Hubert, it found the population in a state of panic, large crowds collected at the city hall and the gendarmes ready to leave. The gendarmes were ordered to remain, and through the bourgmestre [sic], the civilians were reassured and scattered to their homes and order restored. At the same time, outposts were established to assist in controlling circulation in the St. Hubert area as in other parts of the area under jurisdiction of the detachment.⁶⁷

Similar conditions existed in the 3d U.S. Army area and are contained in an account of operations of another Type D detachment which reads:

Detachment 13D2, Commanded by Captain F.S. Percy, Jr., moved quickly, too. It mobilized all Militz and Auxiliary Police in its canton and gave them authority to arm. It then

⁶⁷"History of Detachment CA/MG DIEGI for December 1944" quoted in the U.S. Department of the Army, Field Operations of Military Government Units, p. 65.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 124.

used them to enforce civilian circulation and curfew regulations, and even, in many cases, at road junctures to direct traffic. These units were also authorized by it to confine known German collaborators to their homes and were directed to make arrests. One known Nazi collaborator was arrested and taken to Luxembourg Prison by the Detachment itself, and several others arrested by the auxiliary police.⁶⁸

The combined efforts of military commanders, the civil affairs detachments, and the limited efforts of the civilian government were effective. Concerning the military movements during the period, the 1st U.S. Army reported:

During the period 17-26 December 196 convoys were cleared by First Army Traffic Headquarters involving 48,711 vehicles and 248,000 personnel. . . . The bulk of these movements crossed existing army and corps supply lines and were completed without incident and without disruption of traffic in the First Army area. The largest single day's movement occurred on the 17th of December, the first day of the regrouping against the enemy attack, when approximately 60,000 men and 11,000 vehicles were placed in motion.⁶⁹

Significantly, the 3d U.S. Army also reported no major interference to military movements resulting from civilians fleeing before the German advance.⁷⁰ In spite of these efforts, the primary reason problems of a greater magnitude did not develop is found in the fact that the tactical situation stabilized by the end of December.

As the Allied forces regained lost territory an immediate civilian resettlement problem developed. Once again valuable assistance was received from local governmental officials at the city and village

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 124.

⁶⁹Headquarters, 1st U.S. Army, "Report of Operations: 1 August 1944-22 February 1945," Book II, Annex 2, pp. 122-23.

⁷⁰Headquarters, 3d U.S. Army, "After Action Report," Vol. II, Part 6, p. 20.

levels. By 15 January, most of the Belgian and Luxembourg residents who had fled from their homes had been returned. This was accomplished by dispatching advance village cadre into their home villages to begin reconstruction and resettlement activities once the city had been recaptured.⁷¹

The serious consequences of the German counteroffensive were not apparent until the penetration had been reduced. The retreating Germans effectively stripped the area of all available foodstuffs and most of the livestock not sent to Germany was killed during combat operations. This compounded a problem which was already critical and both food and clothing were required from military stocks.⁷² The net result was a serious limitation of Belgium's and Luxembourg's capabilities to provide adequate care for their own nationals.

In summary, the efforts of the local governmental agencies did contribute to the Allied war effort in Ardenne; however, most of the credit belongs to individual civil affairs detachments and lower unit combat commanders, who implemented actions based upon the various situations which were encountered in the immediate areas. The cumulative effects of these many low level actions were sufficient to prevent a major disruption to Allied counter-measures.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁷²Ibid.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, EVALUATION, AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This study of the 12th U.S. Army Group's World War II experiences has portrayed problems which began on a small scale and initial activities which were concerned primarily with refugees. However, the eventual appearance of displaced persons raised many unanticipated and serious difficulties. The assistance received from the French government was adequate to meet most requirements associated with refugees. In Belgium and Luxembourg significant but less effective support was available. In sharp contrast the large numbers of displaced persons required that considerable military assistance be furnished to the civilian governments concerned just to meet the basic needs of their citizens returning from German labor camps.

In Chapter I the shortcomings of Allied preparations for refugee and displaced persons operations subsequent to the invasion were discussed. As a result the 12th U.S. Army group entered France with civil affairs organization containing inadequate specialist personnel to cope with refugee and displaced persons operations. In addition, all plans conceived prior to the invasion clearly indicated an expectation that the French would provide maximum support to the military effort. Remarkably, this assumption was made despite the controversy which existed concerning the reestablishment of a French National Government.

under the leadership of General Charles de Gaulle.

In Chapter II the success which was enjoyed despite the shortcomings in the pre-combat preparations was discussed. The keynote of refugee operations during the period was the placement of civil affairs personnel well forward in the combat formations. These personnel serving within the active combat zone were able to enlist the aid and active assistance of indigenous officials at the lowest levels and harmonize their efforts with the requirements for military operations. Moreover, the value of French military liaison officers was also evident particularly during the evacuation of 4,000 residents from the city of Caen. Other noteworthy events transpiring during the period of initial tactical operations included the excellent support received from the French to operate the refugee camps and the isolation of problems resulting from both a shortage of French police and a functioning judicial system.

In Chapter III the differences recorded during two entirely different tactical conditions were outlined. In the 3d U.S. Army's zone of operations significant numbers of refugees were uncovered in a short period of time. In addition, the 3d U.S. Army's efforts were marked by a rapid advance through sections of France where war damage to civilian communities was comparatively light. In these circumstances, the designation and marking of roads reserved for exclusive civilian use in conjunction with excellent French assistance precluded the development of major problems. Even the German expulsion of thousands of French citizens from the city of Brest was handled smoothly and efficiently. Once again the major contributors to successful refugee operations were

French Liaison officers and government officials at the city, town, and village levels.

In contrast the 1st U.S. Army's advance was slower and accompanied by an extensive destruction of public property. Under these conditions the local populace vacated urban centers either as a result of German forced civilian evacuations or in an attempt to escape personal injuries. Governmental officials were not located shortly after the liberation of French communities; consequently, the reestablishment of civilian authority was difficult and initially civil support in the forward areas was non-existent. Nevertheless, the French continued to provide optimum support for their own citizens once they were evacuated to areas in the rear. In the face of these difficulties the 1st U.S. Army found it beneficial to improve the capabilities of the French particularly in the restoration of civilian communications and medical facilities.

While the 1st and 3d U.S. Armies were meeting mixed success, the 12th U.S. Army Group began conferences with French officials designed to remedy both the shortage of civilian police and the lack of an effective judicial system. Judicial results were immediate; however, satisfactory police support was not achieved until the question of a French National Government was resolved in favor of the faction headed by General de Gaulle.

The appearance of noteworthy difficulties during static operations in Belgium and Luxembourg, and the tribulations inherent with population control operations during periods of retrograde were discussed in Chapter IV. During static operations the care of refugees

was once again an area where adequate support was received from civil authorities and individual citizens of France, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Extensive use of civilian facilities to house transit civilians and the continued assistance of welfare organizations to operate refugee camps were recorded during the period. Some competition between military requirements for billeting and the provision of shelters to civilians was experienced in the 1st U.S. Army's area; however, the most important shortcomings were experienced in population control due once again to the lack of an efficient indigenous civil police force. In Belgium, politically motivated and well armed resistance groups undermined the authority of existing police agencies. In Luxembourg, the complete absence of public officials and the extensive political reorganization of the country which had occurred under German domination required a reconstruction of all governmental agencies on a large scale.

The continuing deficiencies in Belgium and Luxembourg in combination with the initial appearances of large numbers of displaced persons created conditions which required an ever increasing amount of military personnel and logistical resources. Moreover, displaced persons proved to be openly hostile to regulatory measures and completely homeless. In addition, the concern of various governments for their respective nationals eventually required the military to assume almost complete responsibility; moreover, this task was relinquished only when these dislocated citizens entered their respective countries of origin.

All of these problems just discussed were factors leading to a complete reorganization of civil affairs units and staffs. Specific detachments were designated for displaced persons duties. In addition,

the 12th U.S. Army Group's G5 staff was reorganized to provide a separate branch to cope with the numerous displaced persons which began to be encountered. Again these events emphasized the increasing military effort demanded by the presence of civilian personnel dislocated across geographical boundaries.

Finally, in the period of retrograde operations, a story both of confusion and the relatively ineffectiveness of higher military command headquarters to provide concrete answers to immediate and difficult problems was developed. Civil affairs staff officers were caught off-stride as were the tactical planners; consequently, the full brunt of responsibility was faced by civil affairs detachments and commanders on the ground. Here at the lowest levels, the problems were met head-on and solutions were formulated to solve the various conditions which existed. The cumulative effects of those many individual actions were sufficient to solve both the problem of civilian panic and the control of civilian movements. The assistance received from Allied governments was also a factor; however, the early stabilization of the tactical situation was the major reason serious difficulties did not develop.

Evaluation

An evaluation of the 12th U.S. Army Group's record of refugee and displaced persons operations in France, Belgium and Luxembourg presents two different ratings. Refugee activities were generally successful while the displaced persons confrontations produced results which do not measure up to standards expressed in the current Department of the Army Civil Affairs Field Manual. The four objectives of current

procedures designed to regulate the movements of refugee and displaced persons were outlined earlier.¹ Each of these standards is discussed below as it pertains to the historical experiences of the 12th U.S. Army Group.

1. The prevention of civilian interference with military operations. Commencing shortly after the invasion and continuing through the termination of the German counterattack, the 12th U.S. Army Group met this goal. Particular success was enjoyed during periods when refugees were the only segments of the population facing the military civil affairs personnel. Most of the requirements for food, housing, and medical care were provided by the Allied governments concerned. Population control problems did result due to the lack of adequate indigenous police forces; however, these shortcomings did not reach critical proportions until large numbers of displaced persons were encountered along the German border. Even by today's standards the World War II operations of the 12th U.S. Army Group must be rated as successful in this area. There were no recorded incidents of civilian interference with large scale tactical and logistical movements; however, most of the credit must be given to civilian governmental officials who solved or alleviated many of the complicated tasks facing the military.

2. The use of civil administration commencing early in the operations. No lengthy explanation is needed for this category. The 12th U.S. Army Group expected and received outstanding support from the

¹Supra., p. 8.

the civil administrations of France and to a lesser degree from those of both Belgium and Luxembourg as well.

3. The prevention of disease which might threaten the military force. An evaluation of this area of consideration is difficult since the 12th U.S. Army Group did not encounter diseases of epidemic proportions in the civilian population during the period covered by this thesis. Moreover, the maintenance of public health was a matter left entirely to indigenous authorities. Consequently, credit for this apparent success must also be given to the three Allied governments concerned.

4. The counteraction of the threat to military security presented by enemy agents or sympathizers in transitory civilian groups. Once again this is an area which was not tested by the tactical situation which existed in Europe during World War II. The Germans did not, to any significant degree, employ linecrossers and politically oriented citizens of the Allied nation concerned to create rear area security problems. However, there is a note of warning in these historical experiences which will be discussed later.

In retrospect and in consideration of the fact that the 12th U.S. Army Group began operation with limited guidance the overall success of refugee operations was a noteworthy accomplishment. In addition, the shortcomings noted in regard to displaced persons activities can not in all fairness be laid at the doorstep of this World War II unit. There were simply too many displaced persons and too many political factors, both of which precluded the resolution of these problems without extensive disruptions in the military effort.

Conclusions

In the course of the 12th U.S. Army Group's advance across France, Belgium, and Luxembourg several aspects of the support received from the friendly governments concerned are of considerable value for future refugee and displaced persons considerations. These are:

1. Liaison officers representing the nation concerned were of value, particularly in matters which required coordination with indigenous governmental officials at all levels. In consideration of today's civil affairs organization which calls for permanently assigned command support units from division through theater army levels, any measures which provide foreign liaison officers at all command levels should greatly facilitate refugee and displaced persons operations.

2. The value of civilian indigenous welfare teams was clearly demonstrated during the operations in France and to a lesser degree in Belgium. The small five to seven man French teams were able to operate most of the refugee camps established and required only general supervision from civil affairs personnel. Moreover, in Belgium the Red Cross provided medical assistance and coordinated the use of indigenous resources. More importantly, the French teams were members of the French Army and therefore responsive to military supervision. In addition, the French elements were effectively incorporated into the civil affairs organization of the 12th U.S. Army Group and their presence served to limit the requirements for United States personnel.

3. Military security and enforcement of civilian travel restrictions were both areas which presented difficulties to the 12th U.S. Army Group in World War II. In the operations in Europe it was found

that adequate measures in both of these areas are dependent upon the existence of a functioning civilian police force backed up by a court system empowered to inflict appropriate punishments upon law violators. Problems developed in France due to a lack of personnel and authority while in Belgium the politically active resistance groups undermined the effectiveness of the civil police. In both of these nations a requirement for a functioning civilian communications system soon became apparent and the diversion of military resources to reestablish this capability proved to be beneficial.

Although the 12th U.S. Army Group's experiences do not contain any references to a major rear area security problem the lessons in this aspect of civilian population control are clear. The identification of civilians and verification of their loyalties are areas in which military capabilities are seriously handicapped and heavy reliance must be placed upon civilian governments to provide adequate support. These considerations are critical in future military confrontations since modern day military tactics advocate extensive counterinsurgency and infiltration operations against rear area installations.

4. Fewer refugee problems resulted during the periods of rapid advance, particularly in areas where negligible war damage to civilian communities was found. More serious questions were experienced during periods of heavy combat where destruction was extensive, but greater complications were isolated during static operations when evacuations of civilians from the forward areas were attempted. Nevertheless, the most arduous recorded tactical operation in so far as refugees were concerned was the period of unexpected retreat during the Ardennes

campaign. Requirements generated under this latter situation were solved at the lowest tactical levels by commanders at the scene. Moreover, under these conditions refugees began to present problems similar to those encountered for displaced persons and would have required extensive military transportation and other support had not the tactical condition been stabilized relatively soon.

5. It took a unique set of circumstances to develop the conditions which generated the large numbers of displaced persons in World War II. Twenty-five years ago this situation was caused by extensive German population exploitation policies; nevertheless, when displaced persons were encountered in significant numbers, they presented considerations far more serious than those which accompanied refugees. Displaced persons required a heavy commitment of long haul transportation to satisfy the military's repatriation responsibilities. Support was expected from Allied governments but their efforts were marginal due to the numbers concerned, the shortages of indigenous resources and a reluctance to provide care to other nationalities. Refugees and displaced persons both required food, housing and medical support; however, there the similarities ended. Displaced persons were harder to control, caused political problems, and those from eastern Europe remained a military responsibility until they were repatriated.

Other interesting aspects of this thesis are the similarities which are apparent when a comparison is made between current procedures outlined in Field Manual 41-10 and those measures developed by the 12th U.S. Army Group during the first six months of its World War II operations in northern Europe. Present day guidance for displaced persons,

refugees, and evacuees is given in four general categories--movement control, evacuation, roads and collecting points, and assembly areas and camps. Each of these four considerations are discussed below:²

1. Movement Control. Field Manual 41-10 emphasizes the advantages inherent in the use of local civilian authorities to include those which occur when indigenous police officers handle matters pertaining to security. It also points out the advantages of billeting transit civilian personnel in nearby communities and returning them to their homes as soon as possible. It even describes the use of secondary roads and the maximum use of local transport. All of these considerations were common to the 12th U.S. Army Group's practices during World War II.

2. Evacuation. The current Army field manual clearly describes the problems which can result from the evacuation of civilians from forward areas to include the anticipated increased expenditures of military resources. Once again these conditions were noted during the 1st U.S. Army's experiences in the static phase along the German border.

3. Roads and Collecting Points. Present day procedures call for the establishment of temporary collecting points in forward areas where minimum emergency relief is available. They also outline the importance of designating secondary roads for civilian use after coordinating with staff agencies which include the G3, G4, G5, and the Provost Marshal. Once again these procedures are found in this study

²The U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 41-10: Civil Affairs Operations (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), 14 May 1962, pp. 127-35.

of the 12th U.S. Army Group's World War II experience.

4. Assembly Areas and Camps. Field Manual 41-10 recommends the use of assembly areas and camps for more permanent refugee and displaced persons holding facilities. It also points out the advantages of using public and private welfare organizations in operating these establishments. Again a precedent can be found in this history of the 12th U.S. Army Group's World War II operations.

The value of this study is thus twofold. First, a historical record of specific operational methods, problem areas, and the support furnished by liberated Allied governments has been presented. Secondly, many of our present day methods have been verified, even though this confirmation is admittedly somewhat limited due to the scope of this thesis.

In conclusion, the 12th U.S. Army Group started its operations with an inadequate civil affairs organization and plans which called for almost complete reliance upon civilian governments. The success enjoyed during early operations resulted primarily from the excellent cooperation and assistance which was received from the French Government. When similar civilian support was not available in Belgium and Luxembourg and significant numbers of displaced persons were encountered, these procedures broke down and eventually required extensive revision. The 12th U.S. Army Group was fortunate; refugee problems began on a small scale and increased throughout the period. Modifications were implemented gradually to solve problems as they were encountered. It is merely a matter of conjecture, but if the conditions found along the western German border had existed in Normandy immediately after the invasion,

serious interference with the tactical operations would have probably occurred.

Some lessons, clear from World War II, seem to be so basic as to prevail in future military operations of any sort. The capabilities of friendly civilian governments must be correctly evaluated prior to tactical operations within the geographical boundaries of the nation concerned. Emphasis must be placed upon the adequacy and expected availability of local police, mayors, and other governmental officials. Civilian communication capabilities are also important considerations; however, the key to success is found in the functions of forward area civil affairs personnel where effective civil assistance is best obtained.

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